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DISCOURSES
UPON SOME OF THE
DOCTRINAL ARTICLES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY THE
REV. HENRY BLUNT, A. M.,
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TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF RICHMOND

"Our Church is not Lutheran—it is not Calvinistic—it is not Arminian,—it is Scriptural—it is built upon the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone"—*Bishop Tomline*

LONDON:
J. HATCHARD & SON, 187, PICCADILLY,
AND HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.
1835.

**MACINTOSH, PRINTER,
GREAT NEW STREET, LONDON.**

PREFACE.

It was long since observed by a very eminent Author, that he lived in an age in which it was “criminal to be moderate.” The writer of the following pages would fain believe that his lot has been cast in an age when the virtue of moderation is beginning to be more justly appreciated ; when there is, among the members of the Church of England at least, an increasing desire to merge their common differences, and to draw more closely together in the defence and in the practice of their common Christianity. While, therefore, he feels the

greatest diffidence in venturing to publish upon such a subject as that of the present work, he feels also the greatest confidence that the attempt will be received in the same spirit of candour and moderation with which he trusts it was undertaken. It is impossible, in treating upon subjects so diverse and so difficult as those embraced by the Articles of our Church, not, in some instances at least, to cross the prejudices, and to contravene the opinions, probably of all his readers. When this is the case, the Author hopes that he shall be found speaking with the modesty which becomes him, and never expecting the acquiescence of the reader, one syllable beyond the point to which he is accompanied by the plain and undeniable statements of the Word of God.

As far as the Author knows himself, he believes that he is not entrammelled by any human system, but that he has

endeavoured to bear in mind continually that injunction of our Church, that “ No man shall either print or preach to draw the Article aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof, and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense.”¹ That this has been his constant endeavour he is certain ; that he has never failed in fulfilling it, he will not say ; but of this he is sure, that, should it appear to others that he has been mistaken, he will carefully re-consider any disputable point, and without hesitation retract what he has here advanced, if convinced that he has, however undesignedly, put a false gloss upon the Article, or substituted “ his own sense or comment,” for the opinion of the Church.

After having for years most cordially

¹ Rubric prefixed to the Articles.

and unreservedly received the Articles of the Church of England as entirely agreeable to the inspired Word of God, the Author has risen from this deliberate review of them, with his mind more deeply than ever impressed by the piety and sagacity of the holy men who compiled them, and with his heart more than ever filled with gratitude to God that his lot has been cast in the Church to which he belongs. Of this Church he feels convinced that the highest ornament, and the strongest bulwark, are to be found, not in the rank, and learning, and holiness of her prelates, not in the activity and piety of her clergy, not in the devotedness of the great body of her true disciples to her best and spiritual interests, but in the fact, that every great and vital truth of the Word of God is embodied in her unequalled Liturgy, and her invaluable Articles, which continue from generation to generation, instrumentally to lead her chil-

dren into the paths of peace, and to educate them for the many mansions of their Father's house.

While these remain essentially unaltered, we need entertain no fears for the safety of our Church; there is a vitality in them which in times gone by, has enabled her to survive when oppressed by the heaviest of all burdens, even the deadness of her own nominal followers; and there is a buoyancy in them, which in times to come, will cause her ark to float upon the waters of that moral deluge which may even now be gathering round her, but which will only lift her the higher above the rocks and quicksands of earth, and raise her the nearer to the heaven to which she points.

In the arrangement of the work the Writer has attempted to unite the most simple explanatory statements with the most direct appeals to the conscience and

to the heart. Where he has differed from the acknowledged authorities, upon any of the subjects of which he treats, he has generally contented himself with giving the Scriptural arguments for the difference. It would not have been difficult to have corroborated most of his statements by the declarations of the early Reformers, especially Luther and Melancthon, and that truly great and much misrepresented man, Archbishop Cranmer, but this would have been to have changed the character of the work, and to have thrown an air of pretension over that which the writer only desired to make plain, perspicuous, and useful. It will be seen that the Author does not consider that the Articles are grounded upon the doctrines which are usually termed Calvinistic ; i.e., such doctrines as were held by Calvin, but rejected by the other great lights of the blessed Reformation. Rather he is of opinion that they were *chiefly* founded upon the views

which the immortal Luther, guided by the Spirit of God, was led to take of all the most important doctrines of the Divine Word; although at the same time he fully agrees with Bishop Tomline, that the Articles of the Church of England are neither Lutheran nor Calvinistic, nor Arminian,—but Scriptural.

It was to the younger members of his congregation that the Author particularly addressed these Discourses, and it is to the young that he more especially reverts, while committing them to the press. His earnest prayer is that this feeble effort may be blessed to the benefit of that class of his readers, by proving effectual, through Divine grace, to “strengthen, stablish, settle” them in all those great and vital points which concern the well-being of their souls in time and in eternity, and by making them such “lively members” of the

Church here below, that they shall finally not be excluded from “the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven.”

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

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DISCOURSES:

DISCOURSE I.

PSALM li. 5.

“BEHOLD I WAS SHAPEN IN INIQUITY, AND IN SIN DID
MY MOTHER CONCEIVE ME.”

At the present moment, when the prospects of the Church of England form the subject of conversation among many, and of deep and earnest thoughtfulness and prayer with not a few, every thing belonging to her, acquires an additional interest, and comes home to the hearts of her true members with peculiar force.

It would seem, therefore, to be the

duty of her ministers, to improve this opportunity, and to endeavour, while men are contending for her externals, which, important though they be, will bear no comparison with her inward and spiritual well-being, to lead their people to a better acquaintance with, and a deeper interest in, her truly apostolical constitution and her accurately scriptural formularies. It is indeed painful to think how few, comparatively, even among the members of our Church, are intimately acquainted with those invaluable documents, those bulwarks of our faith, the Articles and Homilies! So unquestionable is this ignorance, that nothing is more common than to hear men, who are nominally her members, actually deny in conversation some of those great truths which the holiest of her confessors and martyrs sealed with their blood; which she has herself distinctly asserted, and even laid as the foundation upon which all her

superstructure of services and offices is built, and moreover, which are among the most prominent, most influential, most essential to the salvation of the soul of the sinner, of any that are to be found in the revelation of God.

Having, then, an earnest desire that none should content themselves with a nominal or an ignorant adherence to a Church, of which it may be truly said that the better it is understood, the more deeply does it entrench itself in the judgment and in the hearts of its members; and having a still stronger anxiety that of the souls committed to our charge, “none should perish”¹ “through lack of knowledge,”² I purpose bringing before you in succession some of the most important doctrinal articles of our Church; believing that, although to many, these discourses may, and I fear must be, extremely deficient in the interest which other subjects might supply,

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

² Hosea iv. 6.

and that to some, they will be a mere recapitulation of well-known truths, they may be made, especially to the younger and inquiring members of our congregation, the means, under God, of informing, strengthening, establishing, settling them in "the things belonging to their peace,"³ and of enabling them to be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them."

Before we speak upon the subject of that particular Article which we have selected for this morning's consideration, it may be well, very shortly, to mention the origin of this portion of the formularies of our Church.

At the time of the blessed Reformation, the different Churches which separated themselves from communion with the Church of Rome, deemed it advisable to publish Confessions of their Faith. Accordingly, Edward the Sixth published

³ 1 Peter iii. 15.

by his Royal authority, forty-two Articles, “agreed upon,” as it is stated, “by the Bishops and other learned and good men in the Convocation held at London, in the year 1552, to root out the discord of opinions, and establish the agreement of true religion.” These Articles were repealed by Queen Mary, but Queen Elizabeth, in the beginning of her reign, established the present Thirty-nine Articles, which were founded upon the original forty-two Articles, from which they do not greatly or essentially differ. Cranmer and Ridley are believed to have been the chief framers of the original Articles, and it is certainly not too much to assert, that, for a deep and thorough knowledge of Scripture, an intimate acquaintance with the opinions and tenets of the early Christians, and above all, for the moderation and caution, the charity and perspicuity which pervade them, they will bear comparison with any

uninspired writings which have ever yet been given to the world.

Having been led by the services of the two preceding Sundays, to consider those great truths, the personality of the Holy Ghost, and the existence and offices of the ever-blessed Trinity, it does not appear necessary to recapitulate what has been already brought before you ; we shall, therefore, commence our observations by an examination of the Ninth Article of our Church, which treats expressly upon,

“ *Original or Birth Sin.*”

“ Original sin,” says the Article, “ standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam.” By the phrase, “ naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam,” the Article intends to make an implied exception with

regard to our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he being supernaturally engendered; and, as all Scripture clearly shows, being “holy, harmless, undefiled,”⁴ and therefore as entirely free from original corruption, as he was from all taint of, and liability to, actual sin.

The Pelagians were the followers of Pelagius, who lived at the end of the fourth, and the former part of the fifth century, and was a native of Wales. “His real name was Morgan, which in the Welsh language signifies the same as Pelagius in Greek.” “He denied original sin, and the necessity of grace, and asserted that men might arrive at a state of impeccability in this life.” Our Article then states, in opposition to the opinion of this man and his followers, that we are not merely guilty before God, because we imitate the example of Adam, but because, as the offspring of Adam, we are actually born into the

⁴ Heb. vii. 26.

world, the inheritors of a fallen and corrupt nature. That there is corruption in us before any outward circumstances could have tended to make us corrupt. So that, were we exposed to no evil example, were there nothing of external temptation to lead us astray, we should still possess this innate “fault and corruption.” This assertion is grounded especially upon this passage of Holy Writ, among many others, “Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.”⁵ When the Apostle speaks of death reigning over them that had not so sinned, he evidently speaks of infants, those who died at too early an age to have had any opportunity of imitating their first parent, and therefore whose sin could not stand in the following of Adam. And his argument is this,—“Death passed upon all men, for that

⁵ Rom. v. 14.

all have sinned,"⁶ or because all have sinned; sin, therefore, is the cause of death; but death has also passed upon infants who are unable actually to commit sin, therefore, even in infants, there is this original "fault and corruption," or they would not fall victims to that which is declared in Scripture to be the punishment of sin.

This, then, sufficiently establishes the assertion of the Article, without dwelling upon those well-known texts, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean."⁷ "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."⁸ "We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."⁹

⁶ Rom. v. 12.

⁷ Job xiv. 4.

⁸ Psalm li. 5.

⁹ Eph. ii. 3. Upon this last passage, Melancthon says, "Children of wrath is a Hebrew phrase; it signifies guilty or condemned, not only for their actual offences, but for that corruption of nature which we bring with us into the world, not contract

Nothing, then, can be more distinctly demonstrated from Scripture, than the existence of this “Original or Birth Sin,” a doctrine which has met with more opposition from the wise ones of the world, and even from many calling themselves the members of the Church of England, than almost any other of the vital truths of the religion of Jesus Christ.

We proceed to the next clause of the Article before us, which states the effects of this original malady of our fallen nature, “Whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and, therefore, in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” We will not, in a discourse which is intended simply

from example.” — *Melancthon’s Common Places*,
quoted by Scott, Contin. Milner, vol. ii. p. 223.

to instruct those who are seeking scriptural instruction for the purpose of its great and blessed practical results, viz., that it may be “a light to their feet, and a lantern to their paths,”¹ occupy your time by adverting to the interminable controversies which have arisen upon the first phrase of this paragraph, “Very far gone from original righteousness;” it is enough merely to mention that, while some divines contend that all which is intended to be implied by these words is, that there is a “natural *tendency* to evil,” or a strong “*evil bias*” in our nature; others taking the terms of the Latin Article,² to explain the English, interpret it, “altogether removed from original righteousness,” and as regards the things of God, entirely alienated from them. Happily, however, neither the Word of God, nor the word of the Church, has left so important a

¹ Psalm cxix. 105.

² Quam longissime distet.

doctrine to be determined by a single phrase. This is the language of the Bible :—

“ Every imagination of man’s heart is only evil continually.”³ “ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”⁴ “ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.”⁵ “ They are all gone out of the way ; they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good, no not one.”⁶

The language of our Church is, as might reasonably have been expected, most fully and entirely in accordance with the revealed Word of our God.

Hear, for instance, the following extract from the Homily for Whit-sunday ; “ Man, of his own nature, is fleshly and carnal, corrupt and naughty, sinful and disobedient to God, without any spark

³ Genesis vi. 5.

⁴ Jeremiah xvii. 9.

⁵ Rom. iii. 11.

⁶ Rom. iii. 12.

of goodness in him, without any virtuous or godly motion, only given to evil thoughts and wicked deeds.”⁷ Again, from the second Homily on “the misery of man,” after quoting those passages of Scripture which record our fallen and corrupt state, it adds, “Thus we have heard how evil we be of ourselves, how of ourselves and by ourselves, we have no goodness, help, or salvation, but contrariwise, sin, damnation, and death everlasting.”⁸ “We have heard how that of ourselves, and by ourselves, we are not able either to think a good thought, or work a good deed, so that we find in ourselves no hope of salvation, but rather whatsoever maketh unto our destruction.”⁹ Again, from the Homily, “on the nativity of our Saviour Jesus Christ.”¹ By the fall of Adam “it came to pass, that as before he was blessed, so now he was accursed; as be-

⁷ Page 390, edit. 1802.⁸ Page 14.⁹ Page 15.¹ Page 338.

fore he was loved, so now he was abhorred ; as before he was most beautiful and precious, so now he was most vile and wretched in the sight of his Lord and Maker ; instead of the image of God, he was now become the image of the devil ; instead of the citizen of heaven, he was become the bond-slave of hell, having in himself no one part of his former purity and cleanness, but being altogether spotted and defiled ; insomuch that now he seemed to be nothing else but a lump of sin, and therefore by the just judgment of God was condemned to everlasting death.” It is unnecessary, after these extracts from our accredited formularies, to say which of the two interpretations of “very far gone from original righteousness,” appears to possess the authority of the Church. But we have not yet concluded the Article. It continues thus, “and this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh, called in

Greek, *φρόνημα σαρκός*, which some do expound, the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God. And though there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptised, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.”

Here the Article distinctly marks the fact, that even in the regenerate, notwithstanding their change of heart, and renewal of nature, and pardon of transgression, there is still “this infection” remaining, so that they are never, while in this world, perfectly subjected to the law of God, but are continually exposed, throughout the whole of their Christian course, to the attacks of sensuality, and the desires of the flesh. How entirely the view taken, in the clause we are considering, of this infection of our nature remaining in the regenerate, is conformable to the Word of God, will

immediately appear from Romans vii., where St. Paul declares, speaking, as we most fully believe, of his own Christian experience after he had become regenerate, “The good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man ; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

Surely nothing can more clearly illustrate the “infection of our nature,” which the Article says, “doth remain in them that are regenerated,” than these admissions of St. Paul. If, however, there be any who do not believe that the Apostle, in these verses, really spoke of himself *after* his conversion, we would refer them to the fifth chapter of Galatians, where they will find the same truths as unequivocally stated in a passage which no Commentator has ever doubted was applied to the

regenerate. “ This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot” (although true converts, and therefore undoubtedly regenerated,) “ do the things that ye would.”² But let us turn to the most blessed conclusion of this most humiliating Article, viz., that although all partake of this original sin, although all retain “ the infection ” of it throughout life, and are in a greater or less degree from time to time drawn aside by it from the laws of God, and from the paths of holiness, and though these very desires which thus draw them have “ the nature of sin,”³ yet that “ there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized.”⁴

This is the healing which came upon

² Gal. v. 16, 17.

³ Mark xvi. 16.

⁴ Rom. viii. 1.

the wings of the second Adam, for the great and deadly wound inflicted upon all his posterity by the *first*. In vain did Satan hope that by the ruin of our great federal Head, and the consequent degradation of the whole species, he should ensure the destruction of the whole; “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”⁵ Here then was a remedy, quite co-extensive with the disease, nay, more than co-extensive, for has not the unerring Word declared, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. But where sin abounded, grace did *much more abound*. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁶

⁵ John i. 12.

⁶ Rom. v. 19.

The result then of the whole Article is this, that as by the imputation of the sin of the first Adam, all men fell, and the nature of all men became corrupt, and all men “deserved God’s wrath and damnation,”⁷ so through the atoning sacrifice of the second Adam, all “that believe and are baptised,”⁸ are freed from condemnation, and are made partakers of everlasting life.

And now, brethren, were we to conclude here, although perhaps we might hope that we had explained the Article before us, and shown its perfect accordance with the declarations of Omnipotence; nay, more, though we might venture to trust that most of our hearers would acquiesce in the conclusions at which we have arrived, still not a single individual might carry away from this house of prayer a deeper conviction of his own lost and ruined state by nature, and of his own actual sinfulness and un-

⁷ Mark xvi. 16.

⁸ Acts xviii. 8.

profitableness. Yet this is the point, which if it be not effected, would leave all our declarations of general sinfulness merely “as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.”⁹

How difficult, how utterly impossible is it for any human teacher to effect this; we may convince the mind, but it is God alone who can convince the conscience and really reach the heart. May that blessed Being, even God the Holy Ghost, whose peculiar prerogative it is thus to convince of sin, send home this day the arrow of conviction to the hearts of some who have hitherto, from very carelessness and thoughtlessness, escaped all personal application of this most humbling doctrine.

We will not occupy your time by supposing that we address gross and outward sinners, persons living in the commission of profaneness, of impiety, of adultery, of fornication, of any of those works of

⁹ 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

darkness, which though hidden from the eye of man, are, as the Word of God assures us, all “written in the light of God’s countenance,”¹ all prepared against that great and coming day, when men will need no other accusers and no other witnesses to strike them speechless, and to testify to the justice of their condemnation. To such it is unnecessary to speak; we would rather address ourselves to the moral, and the upright, and the amiable; you who have filled and are filling the different relationships of life in the most irreproachable and unexceptionable manner, and its duties with so much honour and equity that even your enemies, if you have any, are compelled, like Pilate of old, to say, “I find no fault in this man.”²

It is to you especially that we speak, when we say, that all we have this day advanced of the sinfulness and corruption of our nature and of the entire absence

¹ Ps. xc. 8.

² Luke xxiii. 4.

of original righteousness, applies as distinctly and as completely to yourself, be your rank and station what they may, as to the guiltiest and the most abandoned of your fellow-sinners. All these virtues upon which you pride yourself, will not in any, the slightest degree, avail you, as proving that you are an exception to the general rule of a fallen nature, a corrupt and sinful heart, a mind utterly alienated from God and His righteousness, which is the lot of every child of Adam. Your virtues may exist, we do not in the least desire to deny it, we do not wish even to underrate them ; the fall of Adam did not destroy them, it left much, very much of amiability and kindness, and honour and integrity still in the corrupt and guilty heart : there they lie, like the beautiful fragments of some fair column, each fair and lovely in itself, yet each a ruin, and where all collected, forming but a ruin still. The column which was shattered to atoms by the fall of Adam, was the

righteousness of our nature, its purity and holiness, its entire love to God, and likeness to His image, and conformity to His will. These, in the natural heart have all disappeared, and those moral virtues of kindness to your friends, and affection to your family, and honour and integrity to all, in which you are rejoicing, are merely like the leaves of the capital of the column, which are here and there scattered amidst the ruin of the mass, undestroyed indeed, but as regards the column in its present state, utterly useless. Put them all together, and you could not re-erect the column, no not one single foot of the column; all that you could gather up would be but these mere ornamental appendages, which, detached from the shaft on which they grew, are as worthless as they are fair and frail. To convince you of sin, therefore, we would not inquire into the duties of the second table of God's commands, easy as it might, perhaps, be to convict you even

there, of unworthy motives, amidst your proudest virtues ; but we would urge you to try yourself by the duties of the first table, your allegiance to God.

God demands your whole heart ; He requires truth in the inward parts ; purity in the imagination and thoughts. How will you answer when tried by such a standard ? Are there no thoughts admitted into your heart and entertained there, which are dishonourable to God, injurious to your neighbour, disgraceful to yourself ? Have you no thought there which you would scruple to declare even before this assembly of sinners like yourself ? Would you have no objection to repeat aloud before all here present, every vain and foolish and wicked imagination which has occupied your mind since you arose this morning, or even since you entered these doors ? How much more need you then to be ashamed before a perfectly pure and holy God. Not to speak of proud, covetous, vain, ambi-

tious, wanton thoughts, how many thoughts of unthankfulness for the mercies of God, of impatience under His trials, of repinings under His Providences, of disregard and forgetfulness of Himself. Are you free from these things? Does a single day ever pass over you without, we will not say one such sinful imagination, but without many such breaking in upon you, and carrying you away captive almost before you are sensible of their attack. If this be the case, and if you have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years in this world of sin, who can tell the length of that dark scroll written within and without, with guilty thoughts, unprofitable words, and unholy actions, which no eye but God's has seen, and no hand but His has registered?

Again, God commands that "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."³ Have you through life fulfilled this great and obvious duty?

³ John v. 23.

have you loved the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength? Have you dwelt upon the great things He has done and suffered for you, till your soul has been filled with the deepest gratitude, and your heart with the most obedient, self-denying love? Have you hated, and endeavoured to renounce, all sin, remembering what it cost this adorable Saviour to redeem your souls? Alas! who can come forth acquitted—who can pass unscathed through such an ordeal? Who will not, if he know his heart, be obliged to confess, Here, O my God, I stand utterly condemned; I have no word to speak, no cause to show why judgment should not be passed on me. What is the result, then, at which we arrive? Is it not this, that were there no scriptural foundation for the truths of which we have this day spoken; were the whole doctrine of “original, or birth-sin,” blotted from the Bible, our

case at least, as sinners before God, would not be in any, the slightest degree, improved or altered by it ; there would still remain sufficient, fully sufficient in the lives and in the hearts, even of the best among us, to sink us to perdition. How strange then is it, that men deny this doctrine, and dispute, and cavil, and contest it, as if, could they once get rid of this, they should stand acquitted before God ; while, if they knew their own hearts, they would admit that of all those wretched beings who have now commenced an eternity of woe, there is not an individual who has not merited and obtained his sad pre-eminence in misery, by his own neglect of the Saviour, his own continuance in sin, his own apostasy from God.

May the review of these great truths send each of us to his own heart in serious, earnest self-examination :—Am I a sinner by nature and by practice ? Am I convinced with the Apostle of old, that

“in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;”⁴ and do I in consequence “abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes?”⁵

Be assured, brethren, there is not one soul among us who can answer these inquiries as the Word of God would have us answer them; who shall not, in God’s good time, if he approach Him through the blood of his dear Son, if he seek repentance and pardon as His gifts, through the atoning merits and ever-living intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, shortly hear those blessed words, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgression for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.”⁶

⁴ Rom. vii. 18. ⁵ Job xlii. 6. ⁶ Isa. xliii. 25.

DISCOURSE II.

JOHN vi. 44.

“ NO MAN CAN COME TO ME, EXCEPT THE FATHER
WHICH HATH SENT ME DRAW HIM.”

THE Tenth Article of our Church, to which we are to apply ourselves this morning, is, perhaps, among the most difficult, and to many persons the most offensive, that we shall meet with throughout the whole of the enquiry in which we are engaged. Let us then approach it in a spirit of true humility, not expecting to find that subject plain and simple which godly men in all ages have found obscure and difficult, but contented if we can discern the language

of our God in the words of our Church, and if we can, by the aid of the Spirit of wisdom and truth, deduce some useful practical lessons, from a subject upon which too many are satisfied to reason, and to speculate, and to dogmatize, until all spiritual benefit is frittered away, and the mind itself, fatigued and harassed, in “wandering mazes lost,” finds no rest for the sole of its weary foot. This is the language of the Tenth Article—

“ *Of Free Will.*

“The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God.”

You will observe how naturally and incontrovertibly this declaration grows out of the preceding Article. In that Article our Church has, as we think, pronounced her opinion in favour of the entire corruption and alienation from God of “the nature of man, who is

naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam." Believing then his corruption to be thus complete, it follows, as a matter of indisputable truth, that he can have no inclination or will, and consequently no power, to turn and prepare himself to faith and calling upon God ; for, if he naturally possessed this will, if he had by nature any, the smallest desire after God, any, the smallest inclination to believe, to obey, and to call upon God, then, by so much, his corruption would not be entire ; as regarded, at least, these duties of the Christian life, he would not be at all " gone from original righteousness."

And this appears to be nearly all that our Church intended to assert in the Article before us, that in consequence of the fall of Adam, his corrupt and fallen posterity will never naturally choose, and therefore can never naturally perform, that which is spiritually good before God.

There is, therefore, the most perfect

consistency between the statements of the preceding Article, and of the present. The former represents man as “born in iniquity, and conceived in sin;”¹ the latter represents him as unable, in consequence of the fall of Adam, “by his own natural strength,” to emerge from this state of guilt and pollution.

That the Church maintains the same opinion in all her accredited formularies, may be seen by a very brief reference to her Homilies and Liturgy, which are entirely pervaded by the doctrine of the Article before us. Take for example the following extract from the first Homily on Repentance:—“So must we beware and take heed, that we do in no wise think in our hearts, imagine, or believe, that we are able to repent aright, or to turn effectually unto the Lord by our own might and strength. For this must be verified in all, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’”² Again,

¹ Psalm li. v.

² John xv. 5.

‘ of ourselves we are not able so much as to think a good thought.’ And in another place, ‘ It is God that worketh in us both the will and the deed.’³ For this cause, although Jeremiah had said before, ‘ If thou return, O Israel, return unto me, saith the Lord ;’ yet afterwards he saith, ‘ Turn *thou* me, O Lord, and I shall be turned.’”⁴ The same truth will be found, expressed with equal clearness, in the Homily on “ The misery of all mankind.” In the second Homily on “ The Passion,” in the third part of the “ Homily for Rogation Week,” to all of which I would rather refer you, than quote from them, in the hope that such a reference may induce some among you not only to read, but attentively to search those valuable documents, which, however obsolete in their phraseology, well deserve to occupy the next place to the Word of God itself, in the heart of every inquiring member

³ Phil. ii. 13.

⁴ 8vo. Oxford, p. 455.

of the Church of England. If from the Homilies we pass to the Liturgy, we shall find the same doctrine equally prevalent. At one time we declare our solemn conviction to Almighty God that, “Through the weakness of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing without”⁵ Him. At another, we beseech him, that as by his “special grace preventing us, He does put into our minds good desires, so by His continual help we may bring the same to good effect.”⁶ And at all times, and in all our services, we speak the language of those who feel in their hearts that they “have no power of themselves to help themselves,”⁷ and therefore continually beseech of God to “incline” their hearts to serve Him, and to keep his law.

It would, however, be saying little to assert that the Church were consistent

⁵ Collect for the first Sunday after Trinity.

⁶ Collect for Easter-day.

⁷ Collect for the second Sunday in Lent.

with herself, if we could not also show that she were equally consistent with the revealed Word of God.

Perhaps the words of my text alone would sufficiently bear us out in the assertion, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him," but the Old Testament and the New are equally full and unambiguous upon this important point. If, for instance, in the Prophets, Ephraim bemoan himself, this is his language, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented;"⁸ and again, "Turn thou me and I shall be turned."⁹ If David ask for help, it is with a consciousness of weakness which seems scarcely able to find expressions sufficiently strong; thus he prays that God would "open his eyes," and "quicken," and "strengthen," and "enlarge"¹ his heart,— "create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him."² If the apostles speak of the natural man, they hesitate not to

⁸ Jer. xxxi. 19.

⁹ Jer. xxxi. 18.

¹ Ps. cxix. 18. 25. 28. 32.

² Ps. li. 10, 11.

describe him as a corpse, from which all will, all power, all strength, with respect to spiritual things, yea, even life itself, has departed.³

Enough then has, we trust, been said, to show that, in the Article before us, our Church is consistent with truth, with herself, and with the revealed Word of her God, when she says that “after the fall of Adam” man “cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God.”⁴

³ Ephesians ii. 1. Romans v. 6.

⁴ It may also be interesting to some among you to know that on this subject our Church agrees entirely with the opinion of all the Reformers, as expressed in the celebrated “Confession of Augsburg,” drawn up by Luther and Melancthon in 1530, in the eighteenth Article of which we read, that “The human will possesses liberty for the performance of civil duties,” or the duties between man and man in civil life, and to choose things subject “or submitted to reason; but it has not power without the Holy Spirit to perform spiritual righteousness.”—*Scott's Continuation of Milner*, p. 35.

We proceed to the second portion of the Article. “ Wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing (or going before) us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.”

In the Ninth Article, as you will recollect, there is a direct reference made to the Pelagians, whose opinion it was especially intended to controvert. That fact forms a key to the intention of the Articles generally, for almost all of them were constructed to correct some error which had at one period or another crept into the Church. Thus in the passage of the Tenth Article, which we have just read, there are allusions to the false opinions of two classes of heretics, the Pelagians and the Semi-Pelagians.

“ The Pelagians thought that man was so entire in his liberty that there was no need of any other grace but that of

pardon, and of proposing the truths of religion to men's knowledge, but that the use of these was in every man's power."⁵ In opposition to this, the Article distinctly declares, that of ourselves "we have no power" to avail ourselves of these things, even if they were proposed to us. Again, the Semi-Pelagians asserted, that "an assisting inward grace was necessary to enable a man to go through all the harder steps of religion; but with that they thought that the first turn, or conversion of the will to God, was the effect of a man's own free choice."⁶ In opposition to this unscriptural statement, the Article not only declares that the "grace of God by Christ" must work with us when we have a good will, but that it must go before us that we "may have this good will."

Towards the middle of the last century, if we may judge by many of the printed discourses which we meet with,

⁵ Burnet, p. 162. 8vo. Oxford.

⁶ Ibid.

there was much actual Pelagianism in the religion of the Christian world, but, blessed be God, since the return to the doctrines of the Reformation has by his grace been rapidly extending, this error has almost entirely disappeared. It became, in fact, too flagrant for the improved degree of Scriptural light abroad in the world, and Satan's efforts, therefore, have long been, and now are, employed in deluding men with the less flagrant, but scarcely less dangerous, error of those to whom the conclusion of the Article so incontrovertibly replies, viz., those who think they need assisting, but not "preventing" grace.

It is astonishing to find how many there are even among the members of the Church of England, who, perhaps unconsciously, but nevertheless, unquestionably, hold these semi-pelagian doctrines. Consider for a moment, whether there may not be some, even among yourselves, who are not wholly freed

from them. You have no hesitation in allowing that the grace of God must assist a man's own endeavours, indeed you would consider it most unscriptural to deny the co-operation of divine grace, but then you would consider it quite as erroneous to assert the preveniency of divine grace. You would hesitate to avow that the good work must be begun in your heart by some external power, that God must first change, or turn, or incline the heart, before it can believe, or love, or obey. This is the important link in the chain which is so often wanting, and without which the whole chain falls broken and powerless to the ground. For remark only the absolute inconsistency to which it drives you. You acknowledge the truth of those affecting views of human depravity and heart corruption, which the Ninth Article asserts and which all Scripture has affirmed. You acknowledge that man must use his best efforts, and his most sincere endeavours,

and that the grace of God must assist him in carrying them on to perfection. But do you see no chasm, no hiatus here? Where are these best endeavours to spring from, when all is bad? In what are these holy resolutions to take their rise, where all is unholy and polluted? Can it be in the soil of the natural heart, which the Word of God has declared to be “only evil and that continually,” that these seedling graces are to be engendered? Can it be amid the fruits of the natural heart, the whole of which our Lord has emptied out before us, and shown them to be only “evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies,” that we are to find the blessed fruits of righteousness, and godliness, and true holiness, thickly intermingled? Can they be indigenous in such a worse than barren soil, thriving amidst such noxious and poisonous companions? Is it not then an obvious absurdity to assert that

if the grace of God merely co-operate with our honest endeavours, all will be well. Surely far more than this is absolutely indispensable to the production of a single fruit of holiness and true righteousness. And this the Article distinctly provides for when it says that the work *must begin from God*; when it asserts that the grace of God must first give us the “good will” and then work with us, in carrying the good intentions which He has given us, into effect. So perfectly consistent with that declaration of Holy Writ, “For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.”

It is most important that you should, by earnest self-examination discover, and by the assistance of God’s good Spirit abjure this error, if you are still entangled in it. Until this has been effected, you can never participate in those lowly views of yourself, and those exalted views of the sovereignty of God,

without which true spirituality of mind cannot exist : for it is not until the heart is fully persuaded of its own ruined state by nature, and of its consequent inability of itself to repair the ruin, that, “ With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”⁷

There is no doubt that the great and general opposition to the vital truth of which we are speaking is to be traced, in the first instance, to the pride and self-sufficiency of our corrupt nature. But when this is in some degree removed, there is often to be found a strong hostility to it in many minds, arising from a total misapprehension of it. The first of these can only be removed by the direct act of God’s grace ; to the second of these let us endeavour for a few moments to apply the remedy of at least a clear statement of the difficulty, if we

⁷ Romans x. 10.

cannot remove it altogether. You, then, who conscientiously differ from your Church in this particular, perhaps are led to do so by the following misapprehension of the subject under consideration. You consider that if the work of turning and “preparing ourselves to faith and calling upon God” must thus so entirely originate in God, then man becomes a mere machine, and ceases to be either a free agent or a responsible being. This arises, perhaps, in a great measure, from confounding free agency with free will. If, as we believe, all men are by nature in a total state of alienation from God, and if the means of turning to God were not freely offered to every individual, then there would be to some a *natural* impossibility of turning to God; they would not be free agents, which they unquestionably are, or they could not be responsible: but if the means of so turning to God are offered to all, and if the stubbornness

and the corruption of the will *alone* prevents them from accepting the means, then there is not a *natural* but only a *moral* impossibility, and this moral impossibility, instead of extenuating, actually enhances their guilt. The man is a free agent, but he will not avail himself of the power which is offered him ; as our Lord said of the Jews, “ Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.”⁸ Most earnestly would we desire that every one among you who has ever felt the difficulty of this great truth, would view it thus ; for we cannot but believe that much of the opposition now manifested towards the doctrine would be at an end, if it were seen thus to leave the free agency of man, and consequently his responsibility, so entirely untouched. The example of the patriarch Jacob has been considered as well illustrating this difficult subject. What

⁸ John v. 40.

led him, at the close of his life, to go down into Egypt? Was he compelled to go thither? Was he not a perfectly free agent? Was he not as free to remain in Canaan after the famine commenced as before? How was it, then, that at his advanced age he should have undertaken so improbable a task, so toilsome a journey? Was there any restraint, any compulsion? Was it not that he knew that his beloved son Joseph was there? that as soon as he heard of the waggons which his son had sent for him, his heart fainted within him for joy? Surely this was no restraint, no compulsion, nothing was done against his will; his will itself was changed, and instead of desiring any longer to remain where he was, all his desire, all his anxiety now, were to go to his beloved and long-lost son. So it is with ourselves. From the beginning to the end, our free agency is left untouched, our responsibility un-

impaired. When God bestows the will to turn to him, we, “being willing in the day of his power,”⁹ are as anxious to turn to him, as we have ever been in the days of our stubbornness and darkness to turn away.¹

In conclusion, we would briefly endeavour to establish the truth of this

⁹ Psalm cx. 3.

¹ Perhaps Luther, in his celebrated treatise on “the bondage of the will,” has stated this most difficult subject as clearly as it can be stated. He says, “In fact, there is no restraint either on the Divine or the human will; in both cases the will does what it does, whether good or bad, simply, and as at perfect liberty, in the exercise of its own faculty. A man who has not the Spirit of God, does evil willingly, and spontaneously. He is not violently impelled against his will, as a thief is to the gallows. Again, when the Holy Spirit is pleased to change the will of a bad man, the new man still acts voluntarily; he is not compelled by the Spirit to determine contrary to his will, but his will itself is changed; and he cannot now do otherwise than love the good, as before he loved the evil.”—*Milner*, vol. ix. p. 280, 281.

great doctrine by your own personal experience. We would say, then, to those among you who are the most disinclined to receive this important fact, that man cannot, by his own natural strength, turn to God ; what testimony does your own heart bear to its truth, or to its falsehood ?

You have from time to time heard the blessed truths of the Gospel freely and fully proposed to you ; you have been told that “ its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace ;”² you have been directed to the Lord Jesus Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, and at the same time as one whose “ yoke is easy, and his burden light ;”³ you have been convinced that your mortal life, when weighed in the balance against the eternity which is awaiting you, is comparatively less than the lightest particle of dust which you can cast into the scale ; less in duration, less in importance, less

² Proverbs iii. 17.

³ Matt. xi. 30.

in everything by which men usually value the objects of their desires. We say you are perfectly convinced of this, we will not insult your understanding by supposing, even for a moment, that you doubt it. Now, then, let us inquire whether these acknowledged truths have produced that influence upon your hearts and lives, which, if you believe them to be true, every individual would most unhesitatingly assume them to have produced. Are you at this moment living to that little speck of time, of which you have just confessed to yourself your utter contempt, or to that eternity, the grandeur and the dignity, and the unutterable importance of which, overpowers your contemplations? in other words, are you making God, and his Christ, and his heaven, and his “great salvation,”³ the first objects of your thoughts, your motives, your actions, your life, or this world and its contemptible littleness?

³ Heb. ii. 33.

If you are honest, you may possibly be compelled to confess that, notwithstanding all your convictions, your hearts, your thoughts, your life, are the world's, and the world's alone. If so, can you, after this, attempt to impugn the doctrine which has this day been set before you, that man "cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength to faith and calling upon God?" You are yourself, yes, every ungodly man is, a living testimony to its truth. Upon every other subject so entirely affecting *self*, your own peace, your own welfare, your own happiness, a thousandth part of the reasoning, the exhortation, the conviction which you possess on this would have been sufficient, and more than sufficient, to have produced a distinct and striking *practical result*. Half this degree of conviction, for instance, that you were heir to an estate, and would you never yet have sought it? Half this degree of assurance,

that your house was in flames, and would you never yet have stirred one step to escape it? It would be trifling to make such inquiries seriously. You know that you would. Then why has no real result been produced by your convictions with regard to time and eternity? You will perhaps attempt to evade the full force of the reply by saying, because you have not deemed it necessary, because you do not consider that such a change of heart and life are really needed, because you have always intended to effect this change, at some future time, but it has not been your pleasure to effect it now. It is in vain to answer thus; the only answer which would on any other subject satisfy a man of common consideration, is that with which the Word of God has furnished us, and which is equally irrefragable upon this, viz., because “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them,

for they are spiritually discerned,"⁴ because therefore you "cannot turn and prepare yourself by *your own natural strength* and good works to faith and calling upon God," and you have never either desired or sought a better strength than your own. Here is the reason that in spite of your convictions, you are at this moment all that you have ever been, a believer in an eternity, and yet devoted to the follies and trifles of time; a professed follower of God, and yet living six-sevenths of your time in an almost total forgetfulness of Him; the possessor of a jewel of unutterable value, and your thoughts and desires all centered and settled upon the care of the worthless casket, in which, for a few short years, it is contained.

Do not imagine that if this solution be the true one, then may you sit down contentedly and say, I am not turned to God, and I cannot turn myself to him;

⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

therefore at least I am guiltless, and if I perish, I perish at an unjust tribunal. No, brethren, we must not leave you with a feeling so false, and so derogatory to the character of Him with whom you have to do. We grant that you are not turned to God, and that you cannot turn *yourself*—that you cannot be turned, as the Article says, “by your own *natural* strength.” Here, then, is the solution of the whole matter. You have contented yourself with striving, if you have striven at all, in your own “natural strength,” while a giant’s arm is upon you, and unseen by you, holds you down to earth with a power which laughs your feebleness to scorn. You have struggled to arise from your thralldom, and shake off your enemy, while in fact you are utterly unable even to turn yourself beneath his grasp. Let us then suppose that now, for the first time, your eyes are open to your real state,—and what are you to do? Be not dismayed; look

fairly at this enemy who is standing over you, and under whose bondage you have so long lingered ; it is *your own corrupt will*. Struggle no longer then, in your natural strength, in the unequal conflict ; it is enough to see your enemy—to know that by *you* he must for ever be invincible ; it would be a contradiction in terms to say even that you ever willingly or heartily opposed him ; every faculty of the mind, every affection of the heart, is a disguised traitor, and in reality in league with him. If you are in earnest in your opposition, your course is plain, and the victory insured to you. Call on the strong for strength, cease from your own unaided efforts, cry with “ an exceeding great and bitter cry,”⁵ for “ help from the sanctuary, and strength from out of Zion ;” cry with the heart-broken consciousness of utter helplessness which the Apostle felt when he cried, “ O wretched man that I am,

⁵ Gen. xxvii. 34.

who shall deliver me from the body of this death !”⁶ And “ if the Son shall make you free, then are you free indeed.”⁷ Be assured, this is no doubtful declaration, for has he not himself declared, “ If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him !”⁸ Is it not then a certainty, a certainty as much as the existence or the love of God himself is a certainty, that there never was, and that there shall never be, an instance of one human being who shall cry in sincerity, “ Turn thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned,”⁹ who shall not experience the power of his God exerted in his behalf, and who by that invincible power shall not be brought into the “ glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free.”¹ Yes, brethren,

⁶ Rom. vii. 24. ⁷ John viii. 36. ⁸ Luke xi. 13.

⁹ Service for Ash-Wednesday.

¹ Gal. v. 1.

be but earnest, persevering in your entreaties, and you shall be relieved from the bondage from which no human power can liberate you ; your will shall still be free, but then, free not as at present, to serve and follow sin, but free to love and obey God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent ; free to “ run the way of God’s commandments ;” free to choose those commands as among your greatest blessings ; free to “ delight in the law of God after the inward man,”² and to exclaim with him of old, respecting all that now appears to you irksome and burdensome, and even hateful, “ Q how I love thy law !”³

To the people of God among you, time will only allow me to speak a single word ; to you this doctrine is a blessed and a soul-encouraging doctrine. . You delight in referring *all* to God ; you love to acknowledge that He alone has made you to differ from others, and in return-

² Rom. vii. 22.

³ Ps. cxix. 97.

ing all the praise and all the glory to his holy name. Bear in mind only, more and more continually, the purpose for which he first worked in you that you might have a good will, and now works with you since you have this good will ; it was that you might be “ a chosen generation,⁴ an holy nation, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”⁵ Fulfil then, by God’s grace, the great end of your being ; devote all you are, and all you have, to his holy and happy service, in a simple and blessed dependence that “ He who has begun this good work in you,” will, according to his most gracious promise, “ perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”⁶

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

⁵ Titus ii. 14.

⁶ Phil. i. 6.

LECTURE III.

GALATIANS ii. part of ver. 16.

“WE HAVE BELIEVED IN JESUS CHRIST, THAT WE MIGHT BE JUSTIFIED BY THE FAITH OF CHRIST, AND NOT BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW; FOR BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW SHALL NO FLESH BE JUSTIFIED.”

As in commencing the consideration of that Article of our Church which we brought before you on Sunday last, we were constrained to say that it was the most difficult, and to many the most offensive, that would come under our notice, so must we say of that which is to form our subject to-day, that it is the most important, and the most comfortable, of all the Articles propounded by our Church. It is the most important! for what question can for a moment

be put in competition with the inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" It is the most comfortable! for what answer can stand an instant's comparison with the reply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

We need not inform you that this inquiry and this reply, are embodied in the Article now before us.

ART. 11.—*Of the Justification of Man.*

Before we read the Article, let us come to a clear and distinct understanding of the subject upon which it treats. What then is meant by the justification of man? It is certainly not merely his pardon, for the idea of pardon is very distinct from and very inferior to the idea of justification. Conceive, for instance, a prisoner charged with some crime and brought before the tribunal of his country. He is found guilty of the crime laid to his charge, but he is afterwards pardoned. He escapes the punishment of his guilt, but he does not escape the imputation of

guilt; he is not justified. The judge looks upon that man as a guilty man, and he must for ever look upon himself in the same light. Nothing can replace the pardoned criminal precisely in the same position in society, which he occupied before he committed or was convicted of a crime. Now suppose a prisoner charged with some delinquency, of which it appears upon his trial that another man is the perpetrator, and that he is wholly innocent. In this case he leaves the bar with a very different character from the former; he departs an innocent man, without the shadow of an imputation resting upon his character; he is, in fact, completely justified in the eyes of the judge, of the jury, of himself, and of all the world. The question then before us is this. How can a man stand before the tribunal of God and come away from that tribunal, not merely pardoned, but, as in the case we have been imagining, actually innocent, perfectly justified, no

stigma left upon his character, no stain upon his conscience, no spot of sin upon his soul? It is clear that it cannot be, as in the case we have imagined, by his never having transgressed, because as the law of God now stands, and as we have already demonstrated, (while considering the 9th Article,) “there is no man that liveth and sinneth not.”¹ It must therefore be either by a total change in the law which he has broken, so that when tried according to its provisions it may appear that he never has transgressed; or by some other method, which although it cannot find an exact parallel in human judicature, has been originated and acted upon by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

By the first of these, the change or abrogation of the law of God, this justification can certainly never be effected; for our Lord has said respecting that moral law, to which we refer, and which

¹ 1 Kings viii. 46.

we all have broken, “One jot or one tittle of the law shall by no means pass away until all be fulfilled.”² Therefore, there can be no hope of a change in the verdict, from any change in the law. It is then to this other method that man can alone look to be accounted innocent, nay more than innocent, to be actually accounted righteous before God. And the intention of the 11th Article is simply to propound this method. These are the words of the Article, “We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith and not for our own works or deservings.”

The method then appears to be this, that in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God of His infinite mercy has provided for us a surety or a substitute, who shall do for us what we could never do for ourselves, viz. offer to God a most perfect and unexceptionable obedience,

² Matt. v. 18.

and that for the sake of this obedience even unto death, involving therefore all the unspeakable merits of the atonement, we, who believe, should be “accounted righteous before God:” or, as expressed in the language of Scripture, “He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”³

The Article then continues, “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort; as is more largely expressed in the Homily of Justification,” or “Salvation.”

Strictly speaking, as you will have seen from the former part of the Article, we are justified by the merits of Christ only; when the Article, therefore, says, “we are justified by faith only,” it merely refers the effect, from the cause, to the instrument. The merits of Christ are the causal means, but faith, or a

³ 2 Cor. v. 21.

simple reliance upon those merits, is the instrumental means, and it is quite clear that it is as correct to state that we are justified by the one as by the other.

But while we are thus exalting faith, we must be careful to remember that it is but an instrument. It connects the sinner with the Saviour, but that is all ; as to its own merit, faith is as worthless as hope, or joy, or love, or any other grace, in causing or deserving the justification of its possessor. This is very strikingly asserted at the close of the 2d part Homily on Salvation, where it is said that “ John the Baptist, although a virtuous and godly man, referred all the people from himself to Christ, for the forgiveness of their sins, saying, ‘ Behold, yonder is the Lamb of God which taketh the sins of the world.’ (John i. 29.) So our faith in Christ saith unto us thus : —It is not I that take away your sins, but it is Christ only ; and to him only I send you for that purpose, forsaking

therein all your good virtues, words, thoughts, and works, and only putting your trust in God.”⁵

To demonstrate that this great doctrine of Justification by faith only, is “wholesome,” as our Article calls it, or *sound*, it would be necessary and it would be perfectly easy to show that it is, in fact, the one great leading doctrine from Genesis to Revelations. As our time will not admit of this, we can only assert that every book in the Bible preaches the truth, which the Apostle preaches when he said, “That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.”⁶ “Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”⁷ And still more distinctly in the text, “We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the

⁵ Homilies, 8vo. Oxford, p. 23.

⁶ Gal. iii. 11.

⁷ Rom. iii. 28.

faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law ; for, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Indeed these quotations are of themselves amply sufficient ; for if it be the unerring Word of God, one assertion of that Word is as convincing as one thousand. If it be objected to this statement, that when the Apostles so clearly assert that no man is justified by works, they generally add, by the “ works of the law,” and always intend the *ceremonial* law, it may not be needless to mention, that precisely the same thing is said of Abraham, “ If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory,”⁸ while we need not remind you that Abraham was justified more than 400 years before the ceremonial law was given. It is then too obvious to admit of argument, that the declarations of the Apostles include all laws and all works, and distinctly assert that in the matter

⁸ Rom. iv. 2.

of justifying a sinner before God, all ceremonies, all obedience, all virtues, all graces, all Christian duties, all Christian ordinances are utterly and entirely fruitless, and that “the merits of Christ Jesus alone,” applied to each heart by a true and living faith, must form the plea of each individual, of all that countless multitude who shall be acknowledged as the accepted people of God, and shall dwell around the throne of God and of the Lamb, throughout eternity.

We shall not occupy your time by quotations from the Homilies, because the particular Homily referred to in the Article (viz., the Three Parts of “the Homily on the Salvation of man,”) is so replete with this doctrine, that none who will take the trouble to refer to it, can fail of conviction. We shall content ourselves in corroboration of the doctrine, with a passage from the celebrated sermon of the judicious Hooker on Justifi-

cation, which deserves your attention not more from the great name of its Author, than from its own distinctness and beauty. “The righteousness wherein we must be found,” says this admirable writer, “if we will be justified, is not our own; therefore, we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in Him. In Him God findeth us, if we be faithful; for by faith we are incorporated into Christ. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man who is impious in himself, full of iniquity, full of sin, him being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin remitted through repentance; him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it, taketh away the punishment due thereto by pardoning it, and accepteth him in Christ Jesus, as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled all that was commanded

him in the law—shall I say, more perfectly righteous than if himself had fulfilled the whole law. I must take heed what I say ; but the Apostle saith, ‘ God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.’ Such we are in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or frenzy, or fury, or whatsoever, it is our comfort and our wisdom ; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned and God hath suffered, that God hath made himself the Son of Man, and that men are made the righteousness of God.”

We shall, therefore, consider the wholesomeness or soundness of the great doctrine in question, abundantly established, and proceed to consider the comfort of it. The Article asserts that this truth, “ We are justified by faith only,” is “ very full of comfort.” To prove this to those among you, who, by

Divine grace, have been led to the full reception of its peace-giving declarations, will be sufficiently easy, but to convince those to whom it is at present experimentally unknown, is indeed a most difficult and, of ourselves, hopeless task. One thing, however, we may attempt : we may show you that your present doctrine is an uncomfortable one, so uncomfortable, that as long as you retain it, you can never know that “ peace of God which passeth all understanding,”⁹ the last, best legacy which the Prince of Peace bequeathed to his faithful followers.

We need not particularise all those different methods which the pride, or the ignorance, or the wisdom of man has invented to occupy the place of this great doctrine of the Bible. We may class them together, and address all those among you who have been deceived by any one of them in the same language.

⁹ Phil. iv. 7.

We address you, then, who are hoping at the last great day, that you shall be “accounted righteous,” because God is merciful, and you have endeavoured to do your duty honestly, and uprightly, and virtuously in your different vocations: You, also, who in addition to this plea of the correctness of your moral duties, have provided yourself with another, and hope, that having in the different relations of life performed your own part well, the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ will avail to fill up your deficiencies: You, again, who have gone beyond the two preceding classes, and hope, that correct moral duties, and assiduous attention to spiritual duties, to prayer, to sacraments, to reading the Scripture, will fully supply your portion, and, the merits of the Saviour being freely added to them, cannot fail to satisfy God. We address you, one and all, and say upon the authority of the Word of God and of our Church, that your views are not

only as we have proved them to be, unwholesome, but most uncomfortable. They are all founded upon this one great error, that God will accept an imperfect obedience if it be sincere, in the place of that perfect obedience which He has a right to claim, and which He unquestionably does claim at the hand of every individual sent into the world.

We ask you then from what portion of the revealed Word you derive this opinion? We can show you the first great declaration respecting obedience; it is this, “Do this and live,”¹ or as amplified and explained by Moses, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things that are written in the book of the law to do them.”² You will observe, there is not a single exception; you must do all the things that God commands; and more, you must “continue,” yes, from the hour of your birth to the moment of your death, you must con-

¹ Lev. xviii. 5. ² Deut. xxvii. 26. Gal. iii. 10.

tinue to do them all, or there is no hope from this Covenant. Now we ask you in return to show us from the Word of God, any single passage, or any correct combination of passages, to prove that God has, under the Gospel dispensation, ever modified this command first given to Adam, and reiterated to Moses; that God has ever promised to accept those who endeavour conscientiously to “continue in all things that are written in the book of the law,” to do them, although they only imperfectly succeed in the endeavour. It is impossible. There is no such passage to be found. It would be an insult to the purity, and holiness, and justice of God to expect to find it. God can accept of nothing but a perfect obedience, or He would cease to be a perfect God. You are standing then altogether upon a wrong, a false, an unwholesome imagination,—a mere imagination, no shadow of foundation for which is to be found in the Scripture of

truth. The only difference that God has ever made in this first great law of perfect and unerring obedience, is, that when it became manifest that no perfect law could be given which man would keep, a perfect God who could neither offer an imperfect law, nor accept an imperfect obedience to a perfect law, sent His only-begotten Son into the world to render this perfect obedience, which no created being had ever rendered. Therefore we find in the language of prophecy the Saviour saying, "A body hast thou prepared me, Lo! I come to do thy will, O my God."³ I come to do what has never yet been done, to work out and "to bring in an everlasting righteousness."⁴ God therefore obtained from the Surety that which He could never have received from us, and God still exacts this perfect righteousness from every individual who approaches Him; but now, as the right-

³ Heb. x. 5. Ps. xl. 7. Heb. x. 7.

⁴ Dan. ix. 24.

eousness of Christ, or, as it is called in Scripture, “the righteousness of God,”⁵ it is ready for every believing penitent who is willing to receive it and to come before God, clothed in that and in that alone, and desiring with the Apostle to be found in Him, (i. e. in Christ,) “not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”⁶

But grant for a moment that the scheme which we have been contending against were really true and wholesome, and would it not still be most uncomfortable? For suppose that your views were correct; that together with the righteousness of Christ there must be, in the way of merit, something of your own to offer before you can feel that you are “accounted righteous before God;” that like the Israelites of old, you have a certain “tale of bricks”⁷

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 21. ⁶ Phil. iii. 9. ⁷ Ex. v. 18.

to render ; then, we would ask, who is to count them off at the end of each day's work, and give you your discharge, and suffer you to lie down in quiet ? Who is to tell you when the tale is complete, and when you are really justified before God ? In the *true* scheme of the Gospel this is so easily ascertained, that the veriest babe in Christ could answer you. He would tell you that when, by God's grace, you close with the offers of a crucified and all-sufficient Saviour, and cast your soul upon Him in a holy and scriptural confidence that he has power enough and grace enough to receive you, to pardon you fully, and to love you freely—that even then we may say to you, as St. John to the young converts in his days, “ I write unto you, *little children*, because your sins are forgiven,”^s that you are then accounted righteous before God, that you then begin to “ run with patience the race

^s 1 John ii. 12.

that is set before you, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of your faith.”⁹ This is God’s method of justifying the sinner. How different is your own ! you can never feel assured that you are really justified before God. The “ full assurance of faith,”¹ as the Apostle to the Hebrews calls it, must ever be unknown to you ; there must always be, even to the most scrupulous, and most careful, and most pains-taking among you, a strong degree of uncertainty and doubt ; you will always be subject to this corroding and distressing feeling—That act of charity was miserably imperfect, such a mingling of motives, such a deficiency of love ! That prayer could never reach the mercy-seat, such wandering thoughts, such unholy imaginations ! That duty can never be well-pleasing to my heavenly Father, such reluctance and unwillingness, and almost dislike, even during the performance ! Can I have done, shall

⁹ Heb. xii. 1, 2.¹ Heb. x. 22.

I ever do, my part in this great work ? Such, if really conscientious, will be the feelings even of the best of those among you who are looking to any thing, however trifling, however minute, to fill up the measure of the meritorious offering of the Lord Jesus Christ as the procuring cause of your justification. And such, although they know it not, is one of the most frequent causes of the dispiriting and gloomy feelings which religion imparts to nine-tenths of those who make a kind of outward profession of it, without really obtaining the full and genuine feeling of the great truth of the text within their souls. We have often, in the course of our ministry, seen those whose days and nights have been occupied upon this important subject, reading, praying, thinking, striving, wearied in duties until they become irksome and almost hateful, and yet never knowing the feeling of a settled peace of soul. And why ? simply because they have

never been rightly instructed in the great work—have never been taught to look altogether from themselves, and their own performances, to obtain peace—have never been led to cast themselves fully, entirely, and unreservedly, upon the “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice” of the Lord Jesus Christ. Until this be done, there can be no justification, no pardon, and therefore no abiding scriptural peace.

If we speak to any such at present, we would entreat you to listen while we address a few words to the true people of God, and may you learn by hearing what they possess, to discover what you stand in need of.

To you, then, Christian brethren, we apply the words of the text, and say, “You have believed in Jesus Christ that you might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.” But whence was this? Were you *born* thus? Was there never a period when

you also were standing aside, without any "*comfortable*" feelings of religion? Was there never a time when any among you felt it difficult even to thank God for your creation, (as our Church teaches you to do,) because you were so uncertain as to the coming eternity, that you felt your creation rather a grievance than a blessing to you? And what has made you thus different from your former selves? How are you now enabled to say, even from the ground of your hearts, "Lord, it is good for us to be here;"⁹ with all the trials and the troubles of life, I bless thee for my creation; I bless thee for calling me to pass over this little isthmus between two eternities, because I have, through thy grace, obtained the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. I ask you, Christian brethren, how did you obtain this comfortable, peaceful, blessed feeling? Did you acquire it from the

⁹ Matt. vii. 4.

proud consciousness of what is called a well-spent life? Did you obtain it by looking back upon a perfect obedience to a perfect law, which was fully sufficient to satisfy the strictest demands of God? Surely not thus did you acquire your present peace and your hope of future glory, or the inspired Word of our God would not have declared, “ If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been of the law.” No, the law did for you *that* for which it was given—not to insure a *perfect* obedience, but to convict you of your *imperfect* obedience: thus it became your schoolmaster to bring you to Christ. You have so frequently broken its precepts, and deserved its punishments, that although you have retained it, and ever will retain it, as a rule of life, you have long since given up the idea of a meritorious obedience to it as utterly hopeless, and you have fled from the terrors of a broken law to

the love, and compassion, and righteousness of a crucified Saviour. You discovered by the teaching of the Spirit of God that you must go to Christ, and to Christ *alone*, for the means of justification before God, and by the aid of that Spirit you went to the Saviour, and fell at his feet, and cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”¹ You went for pardon and for justification ; you carried nothing with you but your sins, and a most earnest, heartfelt desire, to repent of them and forsake them ; you went simply to receive, not to pay ; you went as a beggar for an alms, as a culprit for your re-prieve, as a condemned prisoner for your life ; you believed that He whom you sought not only could, but would give what you sought. And what was the consequence ? You received all that you had asked—all that God had promised ; you received pardon and acceptance, forgiveness of all that had gone before,

¹ Luke xviii. 13.

grace and strength promised and pledged to you for all that is to come. “Therefore,” as the Apostle says, “therefore being justified by *faith* you have peace with God.”² You have no corroding fears for the past, no desponding anxieties for the future, you cannot have, or at least, you need not have ; you have been “accounted righteous through the merits of Christ,” which are “unto all and upon all them that believe,”³ says the unerring Word of God ; yes, “unto all and upon all,” therefore, “unto and upon” the weakest, feeblest, youngest believer, whoever with the hand of an infant faith, touched the hem of the Saviour’s garment, and with His kind and merciful permission drew that garment as a covering over his own pollution, and nakedness, and sin.

There is with you, no question, now, whether you have done enough to co-operate with your Saviour in this great

² Rom. v. 1.

³ Rom. iii. 22.

work ? therefore there is no doubt with you, whether enough be done ; no uncertainty whether you are, or are not, justified before God : you feel the full force and consolation of the Apostle's words, "*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace ; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.*"⁴ That it might not be a matter of doubt, but of assurance to all the seed, to every member in Christ's redeemed family, who has thus approached Him in a true and living faith, to receive *that* as an act of free favour, which others, in vain, are toiling to deserve.

From this point then, you commence your Christian life ; being justified freely, you now "run the way of God's commandments," "obeying from the heart that form of doctrine which has been delivered to you ;" delighting in the service of Him who loved you and gave Himself for you ; deploring your many short-

⁴ Rom. iv. 16.

comings, repenting of your many sins, but still holding on your way, through good and ill, through weal and wo, the hand of your Lord, guiding and supporting you in “all holiness and godliness of living,”⁵ and you yourselves, bringing forth the fruits of faith, and resting in a simple, childlike reliance upon the declaration of our God, that “whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified,”⁶ them also, he shall one day glorify for ever and ever.

And now, brethren, we once more and only for a few moments, return to you whom we before addressed. Do you clearly perceive the difference between these persons and yourselves, as regards the Lord Jesus Christ?

You are willing to take the Saviour with you when you go up for justification to the tribunal of God; *they* depended upon his taking them. *You* would not

⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 2.

⁶ Rom. viii. 30.

expect to be accounted righteous for your own merits *alone*; *they* would not for a moment imagine that they had ever done a single deed which deserved the name of merit; if reminded of them, they would ask with unfeigned astonishment, “Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or naked, or in prison, and ministered unto thee?”⁷ To *you*, the Lord Jesus Christ is a valuable co-adjutor; to *them*, he is “all in all;”⁸ for he is “made unto them, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”⁹ You are “working for salvation,” as an object at which you shall one day arrive, they are “working from salvation” as the object at which they started. All that you are doing is intended in some degree to propitiate God; all that they are doing is flowing from a sense of holy obedience, and from a grateful love to God, who first loved, and pardoned, and

⁷ Matt. xxv. ⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 28. ⁹ 1 Cor. i. 30.

justified them. We leave it to yourselves to determine which of these two views must tend the most to promote the glory of God our Father, the honour of Christ Jesus our Lord, and the comfort and happiness of his people. But we must not leave it to you to imagine that the difference is slight, or immaterial, that it is a mere difference in the *amount* of comfort, or of wholesomeness of doctrine. It is an absolute and irreconcilable difference. It is the difference between light and darkness, between life and death. The one view of justification is a mere figment from the brain of man, the other is the great truth of God which will determine our eternity; for upon it will hang the decisions of the day of judgment! All religion therefore is utterly vain which does not centre and settle here. The unrighteous cannot enter heaven, for thus has the unerring Word of God pronounced, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the

kingdom of God?"¹ but then *all* are unrighteous until they have been justified by the merits of the Lord Jesus applied by a living faith. Can you resist the inference—That they who are not thus justified can never, by any possibility, be admitted there?

May God of his infinite mercy grant that these words may sink deep into our hearts, giving us no peace, no rest, until we have ascertained that this great and blessed work has been effected in our souls, and are thus enabled to experience the full comfort of the declaration of the Spirit of our God, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."²

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 9.

² Rom. viii. 1.

DISCOURSE IV.

COL. i. part of ver. 10.

“THAT YE MIGHT WALK WORTHY OF THE LORD UNTO ALL PLEASING, BEING FRUITFUL IN EVERY GOOD WORK.”

It is a remarkable assertion of the Apostle to the Corinthians, but not more remarkable than true, “Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”¹ And who can doubt it? Without any reference to the obvious fact, that while the two former are transitory the last is perpetual, is it not evident that after all, faith and hope are but as the scaffolding of the spiritual house, while the house itself, the glorious

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

superstructure, is love. Love to God and love to man ; love to every created being throughout all time, love to the blessed inmates of the heavenly mansions throughout eternity. The object then of all religion is to give to fallen man the power and the will, which as we have seen he has not by nature, to live this life of love on earth, that he may be fitted and educated for the eternity of love in heaven. Every thing connected with this high feeling as regards our fellow-men, is comprehended in Scripture in the expressive term, "Good works." And it is to this important subject, that the 12th, 13th, and 14th Articles will this morning direct our attention.

There are four great errors continually springing up in the natural heart of man with respect to this deeply interesting topic. These have been corrected by our Church in the three Articles to which I have referred, and which therefore shall be taken together for the subject of our

present consideration. The first of these errors, viz. that a man can be justified before God for his work's sake, was sufficiently considered under the 11th Article, and therefore, will not require our attention at present. The second is of this nature, that all works of honesty, and charity, and uprightness, must necessarily be so pleasing in the sight of God, that let them be performed by whom they may, they cannot fail to draw down upon the performer the love and the grace or favour of God; that, in fact, they at least render men *fit* to receive this favour, even if they do not actually purchase it. Against this error, an error indeed expressly of the Pelagians, but not less expressly an error of every natural and unconverted heart, the 13th Article protests in the following decisive manner—

“ *Of Works before Justification.* ”

“ Works done before the grace of Christ. ”

You will observe our Church takes especial care not to recognise them as

good works, although she is evidently referring to those which would be called so in the world. She contents herself with saying, “Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, for as much as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ : neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve ‘grace of congruity;’ yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not, but *they have the nature of sin.*”

There are few Articles of the Church which are more staggering to the heart of “the natural man” than this, and yet few that more immediately approve themselves to the heart of the “spiritual man.”

The Article simply asserts that no works performed before Justification, i. e. as we demonstrated in the last Discourse, before we have been led to close with the offers of

reconciliation to God through Christ, and have been thus “accounted righteous” through his merits, are “pleasant to God.” Consider only for a moment the declarations of the Articles which have preceded this, and you will see that it is utterly impossible to come to any other conclusion. The 9th Article has declared that we are “very far gone from original righteousness,” that “the flesh is always lusting against the Spirit,”² and “deserving God’s wrath and damnation.” The 10th Article has shown that from this condition man “cannot turn and prepare himself,” i. e. without the grace of Christ, and therefore has no power to do good works “pleasant and acceptable to God.” It is, then, the following consequence of these great, and solemn, and humiliating truths, that every “work done before the grace of Christ,” must be unpleasant to God, and even, as the close of the Article strongly, but not

² Gal. v. 17.

more strongly than scripturally, asserts, must “have the nature of sin.” We say, not more strongly than scripturally; for the Apostle to the Romans has asserted the same thing, almost in the same words, when he says, “whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.”³

This is the portion of the Article which is a stumbling-block to many readers; the feelings of their minds with respect to it, are of this nature. Can it be possible that all the amiable, honest, just, and honourable actions of a man’s life, performed before he has received “the grace of Christ,” can possess the nature of sin, in the sight of our merciful Father? Is he so severe a judge that he will not look with an eye of satisfaction upon those many virtuous deeds of virtuous men, which gladden the countenance and cheer the souls of all around them, and which deserve and receive “the blessing of him that was

³ Rom. xiv. 23.

ready to perish," and cause "the widow's heart to sing for joy."⁴

This is perhaps stating the objection as fairly and as strongly as it can be stated, and yet we doubt not that to the reflecting people among you, a very little consideration will induce you to agree to the justice of the verdict which our Church pronounces even upon such acts as these. Indeed the very reason which our Church gives for her decision, will go far towards removing the objection from every unprejudiced mind. She says that these works "have the nature of sin," simply, *because* "they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done." God has commanded, not that they should be left undone, but that they should be done from love to his name, that they should be the fruits of a true and living faith; if then, they are performed,—but performed from any other motive, for it is

⁴ Job xxix. 13.

unnecessary to refer to their inherent imperfection and corruption,—but if they are performed from any other motive than God has commanded, it is clear that as regards God and the actor of those works, they “have the nature of sin,” they are the breach of a command, instead of the fulfilment of one, and however estimable in the sight of our fellow-men, cannot be pleasant to him whose will they are opposing. For instance, if we are charitable to obtain the praise of men ; if we are benevolent to gratify the feelings of a heart bleeding at the sight of others’ woes ; if we are liberal, because it fosters our vanity ; if we are just, because it satisfies our high-mindedness ; if we are kind and condescending, because it ministers to our pride ; can we affect surprise that, however pleasing to God may be the actions taken abstractedly and *without* reference to the actor, they have “the nature of sin” when taken *with* reference to the

actor, and are really sinful as regards his motives, principles, and objects.

There is an incident in ancient history, which may, perhaps, tend to illustrate this. You will recollect in Roman story, that at a time when the discipline of the army peculiarly required the most entire and positive obedience to the orders of the commander, that commander forbade that any individual should leave the ranks, upon any pretence, under pain of immediate death. The order was, as you will remember, violated by his own son, who, indignant at the insults, and menaces, and scorn, of some champion of the enemy, spurred forth to meet him, and having slain him in single combat, brought back the trophies to his father's feet.

We need not remind you, that the conqueror was ordered to immediate execution. The act of heroism, which, if performed in obedience to commands, would have deserved and received the

crown, performed as it was, in direct opposition to commands, conducted its perpetrator, and with perfect justice, to the scaffold. We are not defending the feeling, or the morality of the act, but its justice, which is the only part of the incident which forms any parallel to the subject before us.

It was *just* that the commander should order the delinquent to execution ; it is just that God should view with displeasure, and treat as sins, those acts which, however grateful to the natural feeling, are destitute of all that can give them value in his eyes, because they are done with no single reference to himself, because they are performed neither in obedience to his will, nor in love and honour to his name, nor with any desire for his glory.

The third error into which men have fallen respecting good works, is, that it is possible to present so large an abundance of them to God in the life of a

truly converted man of God, that he may render far more of them, out of his great zeal and love to God, than God ever required at his hands. This, I need scarcely tell you, is the Romish doctrine of “works of supererogation.” Upon this we need not dwell; if there be a Protestant inclined to maintain so unscriptural a dogma, it is enough for him to consider what God really requires, before he presumes to pronounce that more can be rendered. Almost a single extract from the Divine Word will set this at rest for ever. Our Lord himself has said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” and “thy neighbour as thyself.”⁵ It is perfectly evident that before works of *supererogation* can commence, works positively enjoined and commanded must have been completed. We do not ask, where then is the man who has thus perfectly

⁵ Matt. xxii. 37 and 39.

loved both God and his neighbour ; we might allow for a moment, that such an one could be found, but granting this, what possibility could exist of giving *more* love than could be given when he gave the whole heart ; or doing more duties than could be done, when he is already engaged to the utmost efforts of his whole soul, and mind, and strength, in performing what is absolutely required of him ? The inquiry involves a contradiction even in terms ; the point is too obvious to reason upon ; and our Article therefore wisely shuts it up with the single observation, “ CHRIST SAITH PLAINLY, When ye have done all that are commanded to you, say, We are unprofitable servants.”

But there is yet a fourth error with respect to this same subject, the very contrary to these which we have already considered, but still not less an error than those which have preceded it. This is the error of the Antinomians, who

contend that in the persons of the justified, neither evil works nor good works are of any account: that sin in them will not offend God, and that works of piety, or holiness, or charity, will not please him: in fact, that every thing beyond the one great doctrine, and the one great privilege of the justified, the “being *in Christ*,” is utterly valueless and immaterial. It is for the purpose of counteracting this most licentious doctrine, as well as for establishing that truth which we considered in the last Discourse, that we are not “accounted righteous” “for our own works or deservings,” that the twelfth Article was appointed. These are the words of the Article:

“*Of good Works.*”

“Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable

to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith ; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.”

Upon the former part of this Article, which refers to the first error that we have enumerated, and plainly declares that “ good works cannot put away our sins,” we need not dwell, having shown this most distinctly from the Word of God and the authority of our Church, while explaining her doctrine of justification. Neither need we corroborate it by her Homilies ; it is sufficient to refer you to the Homily, in three parts, dedicated to this express subject. We will, therefore, on this portion of the Article, only add a single testimony, too valuable to be omitted, from the admirable sermon of Hooker, from which we quoted in the last discourse, and which is as clear upon the necessity of good works in their place, and the utter fruitlessness

of them when taken out of their place, as the last passage which we cited from him, was upon the nature of the sinner's justification. These are his words—
“ The best things we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned ; how then can we do any thing meritorious or worthy to be rewarded ? Wherefore we acknowledge a *dutiful* necessity of doing well ; but the meritorious dignity of doing well, we utterly renounce. We see how far we are from the perfect righteousness of the law. The little fruit we have in holiness, is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound ; we put no confidence in it ; we challenge nothing in the world for it. We dare not call God to reckoning, as if we had him in our debt-books. Our continual suit to him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and pardon our offences.”⁶

The Article before us having decided this point, continues most justly and

⁶ Disc. Just. sec. 7.

scripturally to observe, though “good works cannot put away our sins,” which the mere legalist believes that they can, or “endure the severity of God’s judgment,” which the Council of Trent expressly decreed that they could, “yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith.”⁷

Nothing can be more scripturally correct, or more scripturally guarded, than these expressions of our Church; they give that weight and prominency to good works which the Word of God gives, but nothing further. They do not even distinctly assert that no man can enter heaven without good works, because, though unquestionably such is the rule, yet the compilers of our Articles well knew that there might be, and that indeed there must be, many exceptions. For, as the first part of the Homily on good works quaintly, but truly says, “I

⁷ See Burnet on Art. 12.

can show a man that by faith, without works, lived and came to heaven ; but without faith never man had life. The thief that was hanged when Christ suffered, did *believe only* ; and the most merciful God justified and saved him. And because no man shall say again that he lacked *time* to do good works, for else he would have done them ; truth it is, and I will not contend therein ; but this I will truly affirm, that *faith only* saved him.”⁸

As long as we believe in the possibility of what is called “ a death-bed repentance,” however rare ; as long as we would not exclude from heaven even those who are called to God at the cleventh hour, and in the last closing scene of life are led by the grace of God to lay hold of that salvation which Christ has purchased for them ; so long we must also believe that it is possible for the truly penitent and converted sinner to enter

⁸ P. 40. 8vo. ed. Oxford, 1802.

into the kingdom of God, with heart and affections fully prepared to bring forth a harvest of good fruits to the glory of God, though time and opportunity have been on earth denied him.

It is, however, of the rule, and not of its exceptions, that we would speak ; and all Scripture demonstrates that the rule is, “ He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.”⁹ We say that all Scripture is full of this important doctrine ; asserting at one time, that “ In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.”¹ At another, showing that they are “ pleasing and acceptable unto God,” when it declares, “ God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.”² And again, “ I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth ; yea, saith

⁹ John xv. 5.

¹ Gal. v. 6.

² Heb. vi. 10.

the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”³

But, brethren, it is not enough that we acknowledge this, as a matter of orthodox and spiritual truth ; the question is, do we steadily, perseveringly, and consistently act upon it as the rule of our lives ? Are we thus engaged in “ bringing forth much fruit ” to the glory of God ? What a libel upon Christianity are the unfruitful lives of its professors. The worldly followers of a religion, one of whose first injunctions is, that “ the world should be crucified to us, and we unto the world.”⁴ The self-pleasing followers of a Saviour, who distinctly declared, “ Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”⁵ The unkind, and unamiable, and unlovely followers of Him whose example and whose Word has said,

³ Rev. xiv. 13.

⁴ Gal. vi. 14.

⁵ Luke xiv. 27.

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.”⁶

Let us, then, in conclusion, shortly apply the great lesson before us. And here it is obvious, that I can address myself only to the converted and renewed people of God, and for this simple reason, that, as we have seen both from the 12th and 13th Articles, none other, but they who are really justified before God, can perform what holy Scripture and our Church denominate good works. To you, then, we would not be content to say, you must be just, and honourable, and charitable, and amiable, and condescending, and humble, and meek, and affectionate, and true, but we would say with the Apostle, “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think

⁶ John xv. 12.

on ” and practise “ these things.”⁷ Yea, we would go farther still, and say with our divine Master, “ What do ye more than others ?”⁸ implying in the strongest possible manner, that the true follower of God must not only *believe* more, but “ *do* more than others.” So far from the free salvation of which you are the blessed subjects exonerating you in any the smallest degree from those moral duties which it is the boast of the world, though God knows it is an empty boast, that they perform ; more, infinitely more, is expected from the godly man, than is even aimed at by the ungodly man. Is the man of the world, for instance, punctual in all his engagements, upright and honourable in every thing which he undertakes ; you must be more scrupulously so, you must excel him in the measure of your good works, as much as you undoubtedly already excel him in the motive of them. He performs all these duties, because

⁷ Phil. iv. 8.

⁸ Matt. v. 47.

they are expected of him by his fellow-men, because they are part and parcel of that code of honour to which every high-minded man of the world considers himself amenable, and without a scrupulous attention to which, he could not for a single day maintain his footing in society. You are expected to perform them, and if you are a sincere follower of God, you will perform them as the fruits of a true and lively faith. Knowing how much God has done for you, utterly undeserving, you will endeavour to act in such a manner towards your fellow-men, though equally undeserving, not, as shall best serve your interest in a selfish world, but as shall be most acceptable to a God of purity, a God of justice, a God of love. Gratitude alone would ensure this at your hands, for knowing what you have received, you will be always asking, "What shall I render?"⁹ but more than gratitude de-

⁹ Ps. cxvi. 12.

mands it. Your good works must be the fruits and evidence of your gratitude, but they must also be the fruits of “a true and lively faith.” “Without holiness no man can see the Lord;”¹ and has not the Word of God itself declared that the Lord Jesus Christ is the “author of eternal salvation” only “unto them that obey him.”² We do not scruple therefore to tell you that “faith without works is dead, being alone,”³ that you may boast of the highest spiritual attainments, of the most exalted faith, of the deepest experience, and yet, wanting those Christian virtues, which endear man to his fellows, and which liken him to the meek, and lowly, and forgiving, and compassionate Redeemer, you are in reality destitute of that saving faith from which they necessarily spring, and you have therefore

¹ Heb. xii. 14.² Heb. v. 9.³ James ii. 17.

neither part nor lot in the salvation which it secures.

My Christian brethren, we own we do at all times feel it necessary to speak strongly upon these practical subjects, because we firmly believe that one unholy and inconsistent, or even worldly and fruitless professor of religion, does more injury to the true cause of the Redeemer than many open reprobates. And yet, alas ! are there none such among us ? Are there none who, holding all the great and saving truths of the Gospel with the most perfect accuracy, may yet derive many a lesson of amiability, and disinterestedness, and humility, and brotherly kindness, and affectionate forbearance, from some who are not yet known to be partakers of the “ grace of Christ ? ” Are there none who would find it difficult, in looking back upon the week which has just closed upon us, to distinguish a single “ good work ”—

a single fruit of faith, laid as a thank-offering upon the altar of their God? Surely these things ought not so to be; for is it not thus that we cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of, “the Word of God to be blasphemed,”⁴ the Saviour to be “wounded in the house of his friends,”⁵ and the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, with its one great truth, “*justification by faith only*,” to be treated by the ignorant, or the malevolent, as an unholy and licentious falsehood.

If, therefore, you love “the truth as it is in Jesus;” if you love the Saviour who proclaimed it; if you love your own souls, and your own eternity, be constant in well-doing; whether it be to spiritual duties, or to temporal duties, that the occasion calls you, be first and foremost in them all, “doing whatsoever your hand findeth to do with

⁴ Rom. ii. 24. Titus ii. 5.

⁵ Zech. xiii. 6.

your *might*,"⁶ "letting your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"⁷—"being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."⁸

⁶ Eccles. ix. 10.

⁷ Matt. v. 16.

⁸ Phil. i. 11.

DISCOURSE V.

Acts iv. part of ver. 12.

“THERE IS NONE OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN
AMONG MEN, WHEREBY WE MUST BE SAVED.”

HAVING on the last occasion of addressing you, considered the three Articles, viz. 12th, 13th, and 14th, which treat of “Good Works,” it is my intention to-day, to bring before you the three Articles, viz. 15th, 16th, and 18th ; which treat upon the important subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of Sin. The two of these which will form the first subjects of our observations this morning, are the 15th and the 18th.

“ART. 15.—*Of Christ alone without sin.*

“ Christ, in the truth of our nature, was made like unto us in all things, sin

only excepted, from which He was clearly void, both in His flesh and in his spirit."

That this commencement of the Article is founded entirely upon the declarations of God's word will be immediately apparent from these well-known passages of Scripture: "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of the flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Therefore was our Lord certainly made like us "in the truth" or the reality "of our nature."¹ That he was void of sin, "both in his flesh and in his spirit," is equally apparent from these declarations,—"In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."² "The prince of this world," Satan, "cometh and hath nothing in me."³ "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;"⁴ and many other passages which are familiar to us all.

It is impossible to read these valuable

¹ Heb. ii. 14.

² Heb. iv. 15.

³ John xiv. 30.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 22.

documents of our Church without being continually struck with that providential direction by which their compilers were led to controvert ancient heresies, by asserting the true and scriptural views of all these important subjects, and thus to correct by anticipation, those errors which should in after ages spring up, to delude and deceive the people of God. We have in this first sentence, the distinct opinion of the holy men of our Church, not only upon one of the errors of Socinus, that Christ was peccable, but also upon that modern revival of the heresy of Nestorius, which by asserting that the nature of our blessed Lord was a “fallen nature,” and his flesh “sinful flesh,” applies language to the flesh of Christ which even they would not apply to Christ himself, thus making two persons in Christ, which was the very essence of Nestorianism, opening at once the floodgates to those low and unworthy views of the Saviour of the world, which are as much at variance

with the express declarations of his eternal Godhead, as they are opposed to the leading doctrine of Christianity, his “perfect sacrifice,” and perfect manhood.

For as the Article before us truly adds, “He came to be the Lamb without spot, who by sacrifice of himself once made, should take away the sins of the world, and sin, as St. John saith, was not in him.”⁵ If, therefore, our Lord had had only a fallen nature to offer, instead of being “the Lamb without spot,”⁶ his would have been a blemished sacrifice, and he would himself have needed *that* with which no other being throughout the universe could have supplied him, a perfect offering to satisfy the justice of God.

“But all we the rest,” continues the Article, “although baptised, yet offend in many things, and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”⁷

⁵ 1 John iii. 5. ⁶ 1 Pet. i. 19. ⁷ 1 John i. 8.

What has been already remarked respecting the former clause of the Article, is equally true with regard to this. It was originally levelled, against the Pelagians, who maintained that “persons after baptism might live without sin,” and in this they were followed by some of the Anabaptists of former days, and are, we fear, even now followed by some sectaries at the present day.

It is perhaps vain to have recourse to argument to convince those, whom the daily experience of their own hearts and lives leaves unconvinced ; or else we might remind them of the irresistible testimony offered by that form of daily prayer which probably none among them habitually neglect, “Forgive us our trespasses.” Whence can come the daily need of such a petition, directed by our Lord himself, and adopted in every age by the holiest people of God, if there can be a state in which the believer while on earth lives free from daily sin ? Surely, the more devoted, the more con-

sistent, the more closely we are enabled by God's grace to walk in the commandments and laws of our heavenly Father, the more sensible will the heart become of every, the slightest deviation from those laws ; and while the indifferent or the formalist will pass through days, and weeks, and months, without experiencing, perhaps, one reproachful feeling, one distressful consciousness, that he has deviated from the straight and narrow path, the renewed child of God will never lay his head in peace upon his pillow, until he has sought and found forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, for the numberless sins of omission and of commission which each day, as it passes away for ever, carries up with it to the throne of the Eternal, and registers in the book of God's remembrance.

Having thus borne its true and scriptural testimony to the sinlessness of Christ and the sinfulness of man, the Church in the 18th Article continues thus :

*“ Of obtaining eternal salvation only by
the name of Christ.*

“ They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.”

In these days of spurious liberality, it is not surprising that this article, misunderstood as it so frequently is, should have been so widely reprobated. It has been publicly asserted that the Church of England is as intolerant as the Church of Rome, and condemns all to perdition who do not hold the truths of God's Word precisely as she herself holds them. Nothing, as we shall see in the sequel, can be more unjust or more untrue ; still we are well

aware, that explain it as we may, there will always be much in the great truth contained in the Article, which will be hostile to the feelings of the natural heart. So long as the sentiment of the well-known distich retains its popularity in the world,

“ For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,

His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right,”

the multitude will always be opposed to the great Scriptural doctrine of the Article before us. This, however, will in no degree influence the true Christian ; his inquiry will never be what is the opinion of the world upon any point connected with his duty to God : it will be simply this, What saith the Lord ? Is the voice of my Church upon this subject in accordance with the voice of my God ? If it be, let those reject the voice who have already rejected the speaker, but let the language of my heart always be, “ Speak, Lord, for thy

servant heareth.”⁸ Thus, then, saith the Lord, “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.”⁹ Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”¹ And again, “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath *not* life.”² “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.”³

This, then, at once strikes at the root of all that false and hollow affectation of liberality which would encourage the natural heart of man in its pride and obstinacy, by teaching that whatever be “the law” which we follow, or “the sect” to which we belong, if we but “be diligent to frame our lives according to that law,” all will be well. This assures

⁸ 1 Sam. iii. 9. ⁹ Acts iv. 11. ¹ Acts iv. 12.

² 1 John v. 11. ³ Luke iii. 18.

us upon the authority of God himself, that so far from man not being *accountable* for his religious creed, and consequently not punishable for its defects, so far from that man's faith being necessarily right, whose life is not pronounced to be wrong by the world around him, that every man to whom the Gospel has ever been proposed, or who, from Providential circumstances, might, had he so pleased, have become acquainted with it, shall most assuredly, if he have not found pardon and peace with God through the name of Jesus and through that *alone*, be in the end a cast-away. We well know how unpalatable such a truth as this must be to every individual who is endeavouring to build himself up in the false and futile expectation, that what he considers a good life, or sincerity in the creed which he professes, although that creed exclude all the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, even to the Divinity or atonement of the Lord Jesus, shall at

the last great day be found sufficient. But we dare not conceal, we dare not modify even the *terms* in which God himself, in the person of the only-begotten Son, has pronounced this affecting, this vital truth. *He* has said it, and “one jot or one tittle of His Word shall by no means pass away till all be fulfilled.” “He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth *not* shall be damned.”

These are the words of Him who was love itself, and shall man affect to be more charitable than his Maker? Shall man, for the sake of not inflicting a moment's pain, or of not giving lasting offence to his fellow-sinners, presume to alter the terms of such a message, and say that any thing short of a full and entire recognition of the great truths of the Gospel, a full and complete dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon him alone, will be sufficient for the salvation of a soul? No, brethren, we dare not do it;

better to plant a sting in every heart before us at this moment, which has not yet made its peace with God through the only Saviour ; better to be convicted by a world's unanimous sentence, of bigotry, of superstition, of uncharitableness, of illiberality, and an utter ignorance of all that man in the vain pride of his intellect, thinks worthy of his attainments ; yes, better far to be treated, as the Apostles before us were, as “ the offscouring of all things,”⁴ than by concealing, or modifying this awful truth, to leave you undisturbed in your error, and your self-complacency, until the last great day shall undeceive you. We repeat then, and we pray that while repeating it, the Spirit of God may so stamp it upon your souls, that the ceaseless flow of time may have no power to efface and to obliterate it ; that they “ are to be had accursed ” who *presume* to tell you that your sincerity, or your ignorance, or your wis-

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 13.

dom, or your *imaginary holiness* (for *real* holiness out of Christ there can be none) will avail to save you, so that you “be but diligent to frame your life” according to what you imagine to be God’s law, and the light of nature; Christ, and Christ alone, is “the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by”⁵ Him. *In* Him, you are, as we have already seen, “justified by faith,” and at “peace with God;”⁶ *out* of Him, and all virtues, all obedience, all rectitude of moral conduct are, as regards your soul’s salvation, literally nothing worth; you are exposed, helpless, destitute, and forlorn, to the avenging tempest of the wrath of God, “a fiery deluge and without an ark.” Here then would we as Christian ministers take our stand. All other points are comparatively trifling, but this, this indeed, is vital. Upon this, we would urge you, we would pray for you, we would intreat you, we would run

⁵ John xiv. 6.⁶ Rom. v. 1.

every risk, even to the offending you, and wearying you, and driving you from us, rather than at the great day you should be enabled to say, the Lord Jesus Christ was never clearly proposed to me as the *only* Saviour of my soul, I heard of Him as the world hears of Him, but never as my *only* hope and my *only* safety. Are there then, any of you, is a *single* person among you destitute of this hope, this safety, this refuge? Is there one who is experimentally ignorant that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved?” To that one we would say, this day, the Lord waiteth to be gracious, this day, He freely offers to *you* pardon and peace. He “stretches forth His hands”⁷ (it is God’s own metaphor,) to receive you to Himself, only cast yourself fully and unreservedly upon Him, commit your soul to Him as unto a gracious Creator, and His blood so applied, at

⁷ Rom. x. 21. Isai. v. 25, &c.

once shall cleanse, His righteousness justify, and His promised Spirit renew and sanctify your soul. Yours shall be on earth, the privileges of the children of God, and in heaven, an abundant entrance into their Father's mansion.

There is yet one other subject, but purely a speculative one, connected with this Article, upon which, perhaps, it may be expected that we should touch. If the words of our Church be literally true, that it is an accursed thing to say that any man shall be saved "by the law or sect which he professeth," then what opinion must be given upon the state of the heathen world? Here are, as it is supposed, upwards of 600 millions of immortal souls at the present moment living upon the earth in utter ignorance of that only name "whereby men must be saved." Every century, therefore, upwards of eighteen-hundred millions are passing to their long and last account, "having no hope, and

without God in the world.”⁸ What opinion are we to give respecting their final state? It might be sufficient to repeat our Lord’s own answer when subjected to a very similar inquiry, “Lord, are there few that shall be saved?” And Jesus answered, “*Strive* to enter in at the straight gate.”⁹ But as our Church has been supposed by some to have overstepped her accustomed prudence, and to speak plainly where God has intended to speak obscurely, a few moments will not be misapplied in the consideration of the passage in question. And here, although in so saying we shall differ from many with whom we usually agree, we cannot but confess that Bishop Burnet’s interpretation of that portion of the Article which refers to those to whom the Christian religion has never been revealed, does appear to us a very sound and correct one, viz., that there is “a great difference to be observed between

⁸ Ephes. ii. 12.

⁹ Luke xiii. 23, 24.

the words ‘ saved by the law,’ and saved ‘ *in* the law :’¹ the one is condemned, but not the other. To be saved *by* a law or sect, signifies that by the *virtue* of that law or sect such men who follow it may be saved ; whereas to be saved *in* a law or sect, imports *only* that God may extend his compassions to men that are engaged in false religions. The former only is condemned by this Article, which affirms nothing concerning the other.” (*Bishop Burnet*, p. 240, 8vo., Oxford, 1814.) Of this we are quite certain, because God *himself* has pronounced it, that “ there is none other name,” but the name of Christ, by which men can be saved ; therefore we must be most

¹ We are aware that in the Latin copy of the Article it is expressed, “ *in lege aut sectâ ;*” but as the English and Latin Articles are of equal authority, it is clear that the compilers never intended by the Latin phrase to express “ *in* the law or sect ;” for had they done so, they would most certainly so have rendered it in the English copy.

careful that while we do not draw a single inference which shall increase the *severity* of God beyond what Scripture has distinctly revealed concerning it, so neither must we increase the *mercy* of God so that it shall interfere with his justice or his truth: we can therefore only say, that all who shall be saved must be saved by Christ; but whether his atoning blood may not be efficacious for the remission of the sins* of those who have never had the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of his sacrifice, whether his name may not be “a savour of life unto life”³ to some who, having never heard it, can never have called upon that blessed name, is not for man to determine, although it is nowhere forbidden man to hope and to believe it. Our Church has wisely expressed no opinion upon this most difficult point, and we would imitate her prudence, resting our hopes of the salvation of these

³ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

benighted souls upon our knowledge of the character of that God with whom we have to do, and the infinite love and “unsearchable riches of Christ ;”⁴ and resting our certainty that they shall receive justice at the hands of God upon that express declaration of his own unerring word, “There is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law ;” (“for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law ; these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.”⁵

⁴ Ephes. iii. 8.⁵ Rom. ii. 11—16.

That the heathen, then, *can* be saved, may, we think, be believed without impugning a single word of the written testimony of our God—that they *shall* be saved, the 'last day only can determine.

There yet remains the third of those Articles, which we proposed to consider this morning, upon which to offer a few brief observations : it is the 16th, and entitled,

“ *Of Sin after Baptism.*

“ Not every deadly sin, committed after baptism, is sin against the Holy Ghost and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after baptism.”

Having, on a former occasion, spoken at length, upon the “ sin against the Holy Ghost,”^e it will here be only necessary to remark that the object of this portion of the Article is to show, in opposition to

^e In the Lectures on the History of Christ, Part 2, not yet published.

those heretics who were called Novatians, that repentance may be sought and found even by those who have fallen into wilful sin, after having been united by baptism to the Church of the Redeemer, and renewed in the spirit of their mind. The error in the ancient Church upon this point, was, that no sin committed after baptism could obtain pardon, and the consequence was, as is invariably the case, that error in theory led to error in practice, that many, and among them was the Emperor Constantine, delayed their baptism until the hour of death, probably that they might escape the possibility of falling away. All Scripture, however, controverts this error; vain would be that petition of the Lord's prayer to which we have before alluded, if forgiveness were withheld from persons sinning after baptism. While the opinion of the Apostolical Church on this subject may be very conclusively gathered from this declaration of St. Paul to the Galatians, "If any

one is overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Showing at once that throughout the whole Church of Christ, even they who "are *spiritual*, and therefore certainly *all* may be tempted, and all may fall into sin, and all may be renewed again unto repentance."

The Article continues, "After we have received the Holy Ghost we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned, which say, they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent."

With what remarkable prudence does our Church here speak upon one of those weighty and mysterious subjects which have so long divided the body of Christ. She does not say, as doubtless many of her followers would have desired her to say,

“ We may depart from grace given and fall into sin, but, by the grace of God, we *must* arise again and amend our lives ;” she contents herself with affirming, “ we *may* arise again and amend our lives,” thus leaving the contested subject of “final perseverance” untouched: neither contradicted nor affirmed. Of all the high and mysterious doctrines of salvation, there appears to be none upon which the word of God has spoken so little *authoritatively* as upon this subject. Well, therefore, would it be for us all to imitate the wisdom of holy Scripture, and the modesty of our Church, upon points of such extreme and inscrutable difficulty. The *practical* view is the only view which is essential to the well-being of our souls, and therefore the only one which we should be anxious that *all* should receive as the undoubted truth of God ; and the practical view is this, that the grace of God is continually extended over us, that it will never be withdrawn

by God from any one of His believing and obeying people ; but, that “ we may depart from grace given,” and that if by the prevalence of powerful temptation we are led to deviate from the straight and narrow path, God’s grace is still within our reach, and will, if sought, enable us to “ arise again and amend our lives,” and regain our footing on the heavenward path. More than this, brethren, we do not feel justified in saying. It is unquestionably true, that “ He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ ;”⁶ but it is equally true that, as Hooker well expresses it, “ To our own safety, our own *sedulity* is required.” To our own ultimate perseverance in grace, therefore, our own constant endeavours after holiness must be most closely allied ; and wretched indeed will be the fate of those who are driven to seek for comfort on a dying bed, as he, of old, who asked his chaplain, “ Can

⁶ Phil. i. 6.

they who have been once elect fall from grace?" And upon being answered in the negative, then took courage, from the conviction that he had once been among that happy number. Building up their spiritual house, not on the only true foundation, not upon a present dependence upon the love, and sacrifice, and righteousness of a crucified Redeemer, but upon some mysterious or imaginary transaction between God and their souls, the sanctifying effects of which have long since passed away for ever. No, my beloved brethren, while you remember for your comfort and encouragement, that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His;" never forget that this *seal* of your Christian character has two sides, and that if *that* be engraven on the one, we have the same Divine authority for knowing that *this* is inscribed upon the other, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Let me then urge you, brethren, “by the mercies of God,”⁸ to fear sin, all sin, even the least sin, as a “deadly” evil,⁹ as that which alone can cast both soul and body into hell. “Watch and pray lest ye enter into *temptation*,”¹ knowing that as the smallest aperture is sufficient to sink the largest vessel, so also the smallest sin *allowed* in the soul, will make an opening, through which every wave of corruption will flow in, until, unless the grace of God be miraculously exerted in your behalf, all will be lost. While therefore you live in the fullest reliance upon the promises of God, the fullest enjoyment of your privileges, live also in the daily, hourly *waiting* upon a throne of *grace*, for strength to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; knowing that He who is a sun and shield to His people, is, to every evil-doer, whatever his profession of service, “a consuming fire.”²

⁸ Rom. xii. 1. ⁹ Matt. x. 28. ¹ Matt. xxvi. 41.

² Deut. iv. 24, and Heb. xii. 29.

DISCOURSE VI.

2 PETER i., part of ver. 10.

“ GIVE DILIGENCE TO MAKE YOUR CALLING AND
ELECTION SURE.”

WE arrive this morning at the 17th Article of our Church ; an Article upon which the compilers appear to have bestowed more minute attention, and to have exercised, if possible, a greater degree of thoughtfulness and care, and to have been assisted with wisdom from on high, even in a more signal manner, than in any other which they have handed down to us. Well have they said, that “ the godly consideration” of the sublime subjects it contains “ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort ;” but wisely have they added,

that it is so only “to godly persons and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things.” May the Spirit of God render our consideration of these high mysteries this morning “a godly consideration ;” not suffering us to intrude into “the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God,” or to attempt to explain what God has hidden, or to presume to speak dogmatically, or confidently, upon subjects which shall never be made clear to us here below ; but may He bestow upon us the wisdom to take a simple and scriptural, a charitable and practical view of a question, upon which it is in vain to hope that even true Christians shall perfectly agree, until they arrive at that blessed place into which neither misconception nor controversy shall enter, but where all shall be union, and harmony and peace.

I shall, as on former occasions, confine myself simply to the declarations of the Article before us, which are of themselves fully sufficient to occupy our attention, without entering^g into the immeasurable fields of this vast subject that lie beyond.

“ ART. 17.—*Of Predestination and Election.*

“ Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by His counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.”

It is impossible for any person of common attention to read the Word of God without discovering that throughout the pages both of the Old and New Testament, the Almighty is represented as taking a more immediate and intimate

interest in the affairs of men than merely foreknowing and superintending them. God is spoken of, in fact, as interfering from time to time, in the appointment and choice of human instruments, as well as in ruling and overruling all. This Divine appointment or choice occurs, indeed, so frequently in Holy Writ, that it cannot be overlooked, and it may tend to the better understanding of the declaration of our Church, if we shortly examine the different senses in which the term is employed, that we may discover with what intention our Church has applied it in the Article before us.

First, then, we find the term *choosing* adopted in various portions of the Divine Word, with reference to certain offices or employments to which individuals were in some especial manner chosen or elected of God. Such, for instance, was the case of Saul, the first King of Israel, of whom we find the prophet Samuel

asserting in the presence of all the people, “See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen.”¹ So again with reference to the twelve Apostles, “Jesus answered them, Have I not chosen you twelve?”

Again, we find choice or election spoken of with reference to national advantages and national privileges, of which many examples might be adduced. For instance, with regard to the children of Israel, we read in Deut. vii. 6, “The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself;” and again in Isaiah lxxv. 9, speaking of the same people, we find the Almighty saying, “Mine elect shall inherit it;” and again, verse 22, “Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” While St. Peter adopts the same method of speaking of the Christian Church as a body, the visible Church of Christ, as having been elected into the same place of spiritual privileges and spiritual advan-

¹ 1 Sam. x. 24.

tages, from which the Jews had by transgression fallen, when he says, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.”

Thus far, probably, no one will demur to the explanation which has been offered, but there is still a third sense in which the same phrases of electing or choosing appear to be employed in Holy Writ; and this is election, not of nations, but of persons, and not merely to the external means of salvation, or to Church privileges, but to everlasting life.

The great difficulty is, among the number of passages which immediately present themselves to the mind of every attentive reader of Holy Writ, to select such only as offer the least temptation to those endless discussions and verbal differences which have always perplexed this mysterious subject. For this purpose we are disposed to omit all reference to the many testimonies borne throughout the whole of the Epistles to

the doctrine upon which we are commenting, and by which it is usual to establish its truth ; we will not even detain you by considering that unanswerable passage, “ We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning CHOSEN YOU TO SALVATION, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he called you by our Gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ ;”² but we will go at once to the Gospel itself, and to the words of Him who spake as never man before, or since, has spoken ; leaving it to yourselves to search for their corroboration or refutation in those inspired writings of the Apostles, which have ever been considered by the Church as the best commentary upon the words of their Master.

² 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

We shall first, then, refer to our Lord's declaration respecting his Apostles.

We have already quoted a passage in which He says, "Have I not chosen you twelve?" where the word is evidently used in reference to the discipleship; is it not, then, a little remarkable that our Lord uses again the same word, and infers that He has *not* chosen the twelve, when he says expressly, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen."³ It is not easy to reconcile these two declarations, without allowing that in the former our Lord spoke only of an election to the apostleship, while in the latter he spoke of an election to eternal life; in the first of which Judas was included, although not in the second.

Add only to this the other clear and explicit statements of our Divine Master himself, as recorded by St. John, "No

³ John xiii. 18.

man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."⁴ "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy Word."⁵ "I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine."⁶ "And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."⁷

The distinction in these passages be-

⁴ John vi. 37, 39.

⁵ John xvii. 6.

⁶ John xvii. 9.

⁷ John x. 28, 29.

tween those who are given to Christ and those who are not given, is so obvious, that we do not fear to rest the whole question of the doctrine which we are considering, upon these declarations of our Lord, and to say with a celebrated Reformer,⁸ that “if in the whole Scripture there were no more places to prove it, . . . this alone were sufficient.”

If, however, the nature of this discourse would admit of it, we should be content to refer this important subject of “predestination unto life,” and our “election in Christ,” to your own experience and to your own hearts, and permit them to determine the question. We would take[•] aside every individual child of God among you at this moment, and suffer the truth of the doctrine to stand or fall according to his reply to this inquiry, Did you in your own case first choose God, or did God choose you?

When you were in the thoughtlessness

⁸ John Knox's Treatise on Predestination, p. 57.

and carelessness of childhood, what led you to the knowledge of your Maker and your Redeemer? When you were forgetting him in your youth, and beginning, or perhaps more than beginning, to tread the downward path, who arrested your steps? Who held you back when on the very brink of everlasting ruin? Who, when you were resolutely bent upon disregarding him and dishonouring him, when you had indeed wandered far from him, reasoned with you, strove with you, and drawing you "with the bands of-love," at the last overcame you, and carried you home "on his shoulders rejoicing?"

And were you alone in sin, had you no companions in iniquity, and where are they? Have they also returned to God? Are they now among his people? What then, you were not alone in sin, but you have been alone in your repentance, alone in your present state of acceptance with God! Who then has

made you to differ? Who has snatched you as a brand from the burning? Who has saved you where others, in the midst of equal privileges, and equal opportunities, have been cut off in their career of impenitence and sin, and, as we fear, for ever perished? We are convinced that each would answer, It was God, even my God; thanks be to God for exercising his grace according to his sovereign will, and not according to my deservings. “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”⁹

Yes, brethren, this is one of those subjects which derive their most unanswerable arguments from the testimony of our own consciences, from what we feel within us, and from what we see around us. I would not stir one hair's breadth to induce any human being to receive these opinions, until his own experience has preached them to him, or

⁹ Romans ix. 16.

his own heart has anxiously sought them, as the channel through which to pour the full flood of its gratitude to the Giver of all its blessings.

We have seen in the course of our inquiry, that there are three methods in which the terms of electing or choosing are applied in Holy Writ; the election to an office, the election of nations or communities to external privileges, and the election of persons to eternal salvation. We have next to investigate which of the three is adopted by our Church in the Article before us. The very first words of the Article appear to us to decide the question, "Predestination to life." Not, therefore, predestination to office or employment; not as some explain it, predestination to any national advantages or outward means of grace, but "predestination to life," to spiritual life here and to eternal life hereafter.

Should there be any, however, who

do not consider these opening words to be so decisive upon this point as we are led to believe, it may perhaps assist them in coming to a right conclusion, if they will only take an unprejudiced view of the remainder of the passage which we have already quoted. In this the Church distinctly declares, that the predestination of which she is speaking, is “the everlasting purpose of God to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind.” Now it is evident that if the compilers of our Article had intended to refer only to national election, they would scarcely have employed such terms as these, for they must too well have known, that many who were in the fullest enjoyment of all the outward ordinances of religion, might eventually not be delivered from “curse and damnation,” but after all their external advantages make shipwreck of their faith, to the eternal ruin of their souls. When therefore the com-

pilgrims say that the predestination of which they speak, is a "predestination to life," and the election of which they speak, is the choice "out of mankind," of those whom God will "deliver from curse and damnation," and "will bring by Christ to everlasting salvation," it certainly does appear, that however wise men and good men may differ as to their interpretation of Scripture upon this point, they cannot easily differ as to their interpretation of the views of our Church respecting this great subject. We do not hesitate to say, that we believe the opinion of our Church upon the question of particular election to eternal life, to be as decisive as any opinion she has ever expressed in her accredited formularies.

Although we thus clearly state our own conviction of the sentiments of our Church upon this point, we would desire to exercise the greatest moderation while maintaining them. We

believe that many holy men who are ranged among her true and attached followers, do not view this subject in the same light. We are unable to agree with them ; but this difference of sentiment neither diminishes our respect for their piety, nor our opinion of their sincerity or their judgment. We are willing to concede to them the point, that these doctrines are not to be brought forward in the ordinary course of Christian instruction, in any other or more prominent positions than they occupy in the revealed Word of our God. We are willing to consider them not as topics of discussion for the young Christian, but as consolations for the established believer, as the solace of the depressed, the sustenance of the fainting, the support of the departing servants of the Lord ; and surely they who differ from us should on their part be willing to concede to us, that if we believe we find such doctrines in the Word of God,

and if we feel them to be necessary to our own stability, and to our own comfort, we should be left in the peaceful enjoyment of them, without having deductions, which we never draw, and conclusions, which we never arrive at, forced upon us as our own, and the horrible consequences of these imaginary deductions and conclusions visited upon our heads. However, then, we may differ upon these points, which after all must ever be more speculative than practical, let us, my brethren, resolve that, as regards ourselves, they shall never, under any degree of provocation, lead us to the adoption of bitterness of language or acerbity of feeling, or even to the diminution of Christian love, towards those of whom, whatever be the differences between us upon these mysterious points, we believe, and rejoice to believe, that they are the followers of the same Master, with a love as fervent,

and a service as acceptable, as the best among ourselves.

All that, as your minister, I would require of you, is to “search the Scriptures daily and see whether these things be so.” Search them not in a controversial spirit, a spirit in which no religious question, and still less one so deeply mysterious as that before us, ought ever to be approached ; but search them with a prayerful desire to be led into all truth, that you may be the better able to glorify the God of truth. The days, we trust, shall arrive, when the differences of opinion to which we have just adverted shall make no difference in the regard with which each member of the body of Christ shall behold every other member ; when the terms Arminian and Calvinist, Orthodox and Evangelical, shall be forgotten, and when the only distinction known within our Church shall be, that which must always arise

from the ever-varying degrees of love to God, and conformity to his will, and holiness of life, and charity of thought, and word and action, manifested in the progressive sanctification of all his children.

The Article before us having then, as we believe, clearly propounded the doctrine of election unto everlasting life, of “those who are chosen in Christ out of mankind,” continues thus to speak of its practical results: “Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit working in due season; they through grace obey the calling, they be justified freely, they be made sons of God by adoption, they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, they walk religiously in good works, and at length by God’s mercy they attain to everlasting felicity.”¹

¹ It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to remark that,

This plain and beautiful passage seems written expressly with a view to that declaration of the Spirit of God which we meet with in Romans viii. 30, “ Whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” It distinctly marks the progress of the true people of God, from their first effectual calling by the Spirit of Grace, through their justification, their adoption, their sanctification, up to their everlasting felicity ; and asserts that all is of grace, of free, boundless, undeserved grace, from their first election of God before all time, throughout their holy obedience to God in time, and to their final glorification with God, when time shall be no longer.

throughout this passage, every clause, “ They through grace,” &c., “ They be justified,” &c., is a predicate true only if the election spoken of by our Church be admitted to be a personal election ; but absolutely false, if it be considered a national election.

While upon this portion of the Article, it is important to remark, as we have before had occasion to do, the extreme caution and watchfulness of our Church not to admit a single questionable statement into these valuable documents. You will observe that the subject of reprobation, or the Calvinistic doctrine, that as certain persons are elected to eternal life, so certain persons are elected to eternal condemnation, is left entirely untouched. The compilers of our Articles were never tempted to enter upon those unhallowed deductions with which men are so apt to delight themselves on this high subject, saying, If it please God to elect certain persons in Christ, to “bring to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour,” then must he, by this act, condemn, or, at the very least, pass by all others, and seal them up under final condemnation. Not a word of this kind is to be found in our Articles, in our Homilies, or in our Liturgy ; no, not although

you search the accredited formularies of our Church from end to end, will you find a single sentence breathing such a doctrine. The fact is that, upon this point, it has, "at least so it appears to us, pleased God to reveal nothing, and, therefore, most wisely and most discreetly it has pleased our Church also to assert nothing."²

² There are indeed ^{*}some excellent cautions towards the latter part of the Article; but we do not think that these invalidate what we have just asserted, or refer in any degree to the doctrine of reprobation, but simply to an unhallowed and licentious view of the great doctrine propounded in the former part. Thus, after declaring that the godly consideration of predestination is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, "as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love to God," the Article proceeds to show that the consideration of the same subject by curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of God, "is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation or into recklessness of most unclean living;" plainly

Far be it, then, from me to speak dogmatically where our Church is silent, but, as regards my own opinion, as there may be those among you who might desire to know the sentiments of your minister upon so weighty, so tremendous a point, I feel no hesitation in declaring that I believe the doctrine of reprobation to be as utterly at variance with all that is revealed to us of the character of God, as with those many unequivocal declarations of his Divine Word, that “He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” That he has “No pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.” While it appears to me that the inspired writers, and even our Lord himself, speaking, as they often do, very distinctly upon the doctrine of election, referring to those who argue, that if they are elected, no sin can hinder them, and if they are not elected, no holiness can help them.

always take especial care to except the doctrine of reprobation.³ Thus, in the description of the final judgment in the Twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, our Lord appears to take for granted the

³ That this is the view of all the best authorities in our Church might easily be shown, but a single passage from Hooker must suffice, “ For if God’s electing do, in order, (as needs it must) pre-suppose the foresight of their *being* that are elected, though they be elected before they be ; nor only the positive foresight of their being, but also the permissive of their being miserable, because election is through mercy, and mercy doth always pre-suppose misery ; it followeth, that the very chosen of God acknowledge to the praise of the riches of his exceeding free compassion, that when he in *his secret determination set it down*, ‘ *Those shall live and not die,*’ they lay as ugly spectacles before him, as lepers . . . miserable, worthy to be had in detestation ; and shall any forsaken creature be able to say unto God, ‘ Thou didst plunge me into the depth, and assign me unto endless torments, only to satisfy thine own will, finding nothing in me for which I could seem in thy sight so well worthy to feel everlasting flames ? ’ ”—*Hooker’s Answer to Travers*, page 482, Edit. 1622.

former of these doctrines as a well-established truth, when he says, “ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ;” while, at the same time, he appears as distinctly to exclude the latter doctrine when he adds, “ Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared” (not for you, but) “ for the devil and his angels.”

If, then, “ We receive God’s promises as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture,” and not as they be limited or restricted by the results of human reasoning, we shall, on the one hand, neither desire to reject, nor to explain away, nor to render futile such mysterious doctrines as those which we have been considering ; nor shall we, on the other hand, be afraid to give their full and literal meaning to such promises

as these : “ Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.” While in fact we shall hold the doctrine of this Article, viz., particular election, as it is most plainly propounded by our Lord when he said, “ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me,” we shall hold the great doctrine of universal redemption,⁴ which appears to be with

⁴ The doctrine of universal redemption, (very different from the figment of universal *pardon*) is most emphatically stated in the 31st Article of our Church, which says, “ The offering of Christ once made is that perfect *Redemption*, propitiation and satisfaction for *all the sins of the whole world*, both original and actual.” That this was the opinion of the chief compiler of our Articles, may be seen from many parts of his works; e. g. “ This is the honour and glory of our High Priest, wherein he admitteth neither partner nor successor. For by his one oblation *he satisfied the Father for all men’s sins.*” —*Cranmer’s Answer to Gardiner*, p. 372. “ Mark here, he saith, ‘ Come *all ye* ;’ wherefore then should

equal plainness involved in the concluding passage, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Whether we are able or unable to reconcile these apparently conflicting statements is of little moment; both are to be found in the unerring Word of God, and therefore each is of equal importance and of equal truth; and receiving both in humility and in love, we shall raise our heartfelt acknowledgments upon every review of these blessed and lifegiving truths, to “God the Father, who hath made us and all the world; to God the Son, who hath redeemed us and all mankind; and to God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth us and all the elect people of God.”—(Catechism of the Church of England.)

We have seen, then, that the end to which we are elected by God, is ever-

any man despair to shut out himself from these promises of Christ, which be general and pertain to the *whole world*.”—*Sermons*, p. 182, Edit. 1584.

lasting life ; but we must never forget that faith and holiness are the means through which we must pass to it ; that there is no instance in sacred writ in which this end and these means are disunited. All tend to this point, that “ we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” “ For whom He did fore-know, he also did predestinate,” says the Apostle, “ to be conformed to the image of his Son.” It is then perfectly clear that none are among the elect people of God who do not obey the call to that faith in a crucified Redeemer, “ without which no man living shall be justified,” and to that “ holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” That none are predestinated to everlasting life who are not “ conformed to the image of the Saviour,” i. e., imitating him in their life and conversation : that none are “ chosen in Christ out of the world,”

who are not also “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Bear then continually in mind, brethren, that if you are elect to the enjoyment of everlasting life, it can only be “through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;”² that if, as the Article expresses it, “Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God,” concerning you “whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind,” it is equally his everlasting purpose “that you should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”³ No man ever was or ever can be elected to the end, who was not elected to the way which leads to it. Be assured, therefore, that unless you are united by a living faith to the Saviour—unless you are continually striving after conformity to His will, obedience to His laws, love to His person, hatred to, and abstinence from all sin, you have no evi-

² 1 Pet. i. 2.³ Ephes. i. 4.

dence, you can have no evidence, that your names are written in the Lamb's book of life ; for be ye sure of this, that no man who is not found cleansed and purified by the Spirit of Christ, and walking while on earth in the strait and narrow way which alone leads to heaven, can ever hope to be ultimately found in that heaven, the gate of which, though " wide enough to admit the greatest sinner, is too narrow to admit the smallest sin." " Give, therefore, diligence to make your calling and election sure;" not simply to obtain an assurance of it, as some would explain away the meaning of the passage, but to make it sure, firm, secure, stedfast. Recollect, an Apostle could declare, " I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway ;" and let the recollection urge you to greater zeal, greater prayerfulness, greater holiness, " Giving all

diligence to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, charity;” “for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

In conclusion, if I address any of you who are unable to receive the truths, of which we have this day spoken, as the truths of God, “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid.” “Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord,”⁴ is his own most gracious promise, and in due time will assuredly be fulfilled to all who seek it. If you need the consolation or encouragement which this blessed doctrine is so well calculated to bestow, we doubt not that it will be given you: if you need it not, and do not, and cannot, receive it, be careful not to be tempted to scorn those who hold it, lest haply you be found to

⁴ Hos. vi. 3.

fight against God. Be content to rest upon that Rock of Ages on which we all are resting; to dwell on those things on which all the children of God agree, and to leave those on which they differ, till a day of brighter light, and more unclouded sunshine. It is an unspeakable blessing to know that there is not any difficulty, and, blessed be God, there has never been, among real Christians, any controversy respecting the one great truth which is the basis of our hope, the foundation of our eternity, viz., “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;” and “he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.” If your souls are ever tempest-tossed upon that ocean of the mysteries of God which man can never fathom, here they may find an anchorage, whence neither wind nor wave can drive them. It is a declaration so plain, “that he may run that readeth it;”⁵ and

⁵ Hab. ii. 2.

yet so powerful, that the guiltiest sinner upon earth needs no plea more availing to enable him to stand before the bar of God, in garments of as unspotted whiteness as ever graced the 'angels and archangels who surround his throne. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." None can be saved who fly not to that cleansing blood, none can be lost who go as penitent believers there. On this vital point, you who deny the doctrine of election believe no less; and we who hold the doctrine believe no more. Here, upon this key-stone of the arch of our salvation, all true believers, of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue, have taken their fixed and final stand. Heaven and earth *may* pass away, *must* pass away, but, amidst the ruin of a falling world, this key-stone of the arch shall remain inviolate, and not an individual, from our great forefather Adam, to his last and youngest son, who has firmly set his foot upon that arch, but shall be pro-

nounced a conqueror, and “ more than conqueror, through Him that loveth us.” May we, brethren, be found, upon that great and coming day, thus planted upon the Rock⁴ of Ages; may we even now taste something of the stability and comfort which this can alone impart, and on that day when all else shall for ever pass away from beneath our feet, may we, firmly fixed on this immoveable foundation, take up the Conqueror’s song and exclaim, “ Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ !”⁶

⁶ “ In chapters ix. x., &c., of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul treats the sentence of predestination. For from that alone depend all things; that is, who will or not receive the Word, who will or not believe, who are to be delivered from sin, who blinded, who condemned, and who justified. And assuredly this firm sentence and immoveable necessity of predestination is most necessary. For so weak are we, that were it placed in our hands, very few or none would be saved. For the devil would overcome all. But now since this firm and most certain sentence of God cannot be changed nor reversed by any creature, there is a hope surely left

us of conquering sin at length, how much soever it now rage in the flesh. But here those inquisitive persons are to be checked, who, before they have learned Christ and the virtue of the cross, pry into the abyss of predestination, and vainly seek to know whether they are predestinated or not. For these will doubtless lead and precipitate themselves by their own foolish curiosity into the snares of conscience or desperation. But do thou in the process of learning sacred truth, follow the train and order delivered by the Apostle. First, learn to know Christ, that thou mayest confess thine own powers of no avail but to sin. Then wrestle diligently with the flesh by faith, as he teaches in chap. vii. Presently, when thou have come to the viiith chap., that is, when thou hast had trial of tribulation and the cross, then, for the first time, this necessity of predestination will grow sweet, then, for the first time, thou wilt perceive in chapters x., xi., how full of comfort is predestination. For unless thou hast experienced tribulation; unless thou hast felt thyself brought, as we see in David and other saints, sometimes to the gates of hell, thou canst not handle the sentence of predestination without danger, and, as it were, a blasphemous murmuring of nature against God. It is necessary, therefore, that the old Adam should be mortified and the senses of the flesh bruised, and that the babes in Christ should grow to riper age before

they drink this *strong wine*.”—*Luther’s Preface to Ep. to the Romans*. Works, vol. v. 100. Witeb. 1554.

The above passage (for calling his attention to which, the Author is indebted to a note in the Rev. V. Short’s History of the Church of England) seems entirely the groundwork of the 17th Article of our Church, and fully justifies us in saying that the Article is more Lutheran than Calvinistic. At the same time, it differs as widely from the views of those who imagine election to be confined to national privileges (for where would be the “strong wine,” “metacum,” in the doctrine of *national* election?) as it does from those who, with Calvin, consider personal election to be a doctrine lying at the foundation of our faith, and upon which “the babes in Christ” are to be built, instead of reserving it for the top-stone of the arch, the crowning truth of our religion, revealed for the comfort and encouragement of those who have already learnt “to know Christ,” and have found by experience, that if their salvation were placed in their own hands, “the devil would overcome all.” In truth, it is a doctrine which the head must condescend to learn from the heart.

As an example of the spirit in which such truth should be maintained, see an affecting letter of the martyr, John Bradford, “To certain men not rightly persuaded in the most true, comfortable, and necessary doctrine of God’s holy election and predestination.”—Letter lxvii.

DISCOURSE VII.

TITUS iii. 4, 5, 6.

“ BUT AFTER THAT THE KINDNESS AND LOVE OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR TOWARD MAN APPEARED, NOT BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH WE HAVE DONE, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY HE SAVED US, BY THE WASHING OF REGENERATION AND RENEWING OF THE HOLY GHOST; WHICH HE SHED ON US ABUNDANTLY, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR.”

THE only two doctrinal Articles which now remain to be brought under review, are the 27th and 28th, which contain the opinions of our Reformers upon the two sacraments which “ Christ ordained in his Church, ” “ Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.”

The 27th Article, which is confined to the very important subject of Christian baptism, will afford, under the Divine blessing, profitable matter for our present consideration.

It is almost unnecessary to remind you, that baptism is that initiatory rite established by the great Founder of our holy religion, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, when he said, “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Through this Divine ordinance, as through a portal, it is not too much to say, speaking generally,¹ that all true converts are required to pass before they can be considered members of the visible Church of the Redeemer upon earth, or inheritors of its blessings in eternity,—“He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved.”

Rightly to understand the important post occupied by this Christian sacrament at the very threshold of the religion we profess, it is well to bear in mind

¹ Q. “How many sacraments hath Christ ordained in his Church?”—A. Two only, as generally necessary to salvation.”—*Catechism of the Church of England.*

the nature of that initiatory ceremony which stood equally at the threshold of the religion which Christianity superseded. We find, then, that at eight² days old every infant of the children of Israel was solemnly dedicated to the God of Israel by the rite of circumcision. In this rite the infant entered into covenant with God, and became one of that visible Church of God on earth, of which the Apostle predicates such illustrious things, when he says, “To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants.”³ To every child, then, who was circumcised according to the letter of God’s law, a free access was opened to all the abundant spiritual blessings which the chosen people of God enjoyed, since, all infant as he was, he was included in the covenant which God had made with Israel; and, unless from his own subsequent misconduct he forfeited these blessings, he was numbered among the

² Gen. xvii. 12.³ Rom. ix. 4.

true Israelites,⁴ the possessors of the land of promise here, the inheritors of the land of promise hereafter.

It was natural, then, that in the Christian dispensation, which is called in Scripture “the better covenant,” and with reference to which it was declared that Christ should “in all things have the pre-eminence” over Moses, there should be some initiatory rite by which the infant children of believers should be brought into covenant with God, and be permitted, at as early an age, to enjoy at least all the spiritual advantages which had been enjoyed in the Jewish Church, and with as large an addition to those advantages as the freeness and the fulness of the Gospel dispensation exceeded those of the Jewish dispensation.

What might so reasonably have been anticipated from the mercy and tender compassion of our God, his own word,

⁴ “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel.”—Rom. ix. 6.

as we shall see, assures us it is come to pass, and it is in dependence upon the authority of that word that our Reformers declared such great and glorious things respecting Christian baptism as we find throughout all the offices of our Church. To demonstrate this, I shall commence by referring you to the first answer in the Church Catechism, in which the child is taught to declare, respecting his baptism, that therein he “was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” While, in answer to “What is the inward and spiritual grace of baptism?” he is taught to reply, “A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for, being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.” And this is in perfect accordance with the baptismal service, in which the Church teaches us to pray that the infant then brought to God “may re-

ceive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration ;” and, having so asked, she again, in “ the full assurance of faith,” that “ whatsoever we ask in prayer believing, we shall receive,” if it be according to the will⁵ of God, and the mind of the Spirit, directs us to return our humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God, “ that it hath pleased him to regenerate this infant with his Holy Spirit, to receive him for his own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into his holy Church.”⁶

The doctrine which our Reformers propounded so plainly in the Catechism, and in the Baptismal Service, will be found stated with equal clearness and truth in the Article now before us.

“ ART. 27.—*Of Baptism.*

“ Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others who are not baptized, but it is also a sign

⁵ 1 John v. 14.

⁶ Baptismal Service.

of regeneration, or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church ; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed ; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.”⁷ Our Church declares, then, in these words, that by “ regeneration or

⁷ I did not notice the concluding passage of the Article, viz., “ The baptism of young children, is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ,” because it appeared needless to enter upon the arguments by which infant baptism is proved to be according to the will of God, while addressing a congregation who entertain no doubts upon the subject. The fact that baptism supplies the place of circumcision, and the certainty that, unless it did so, it would be difficult to show that the dispensation under which we live is in all things that “ better covenant” which the Spirit of God pronounces it ; this, added to the uniform practice of the Christian Church for nearly one thousand years, appears fully sufficient to satisfy the mind of every unprejudiced inquirer.

new birth," they that "receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church," and have "the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of their adoption to be the sons of God, 'by the Holy Ghost, visibly signed and sealed.'" Now let us endeavour to disencumber ourselves of all human systems, and forgetting the long, and angry, and bitter controversies which have arisen upon these points, refer simply to the Word of God, and discover how far the Church is borne out, in these her declarations, by the authority of that Word, from which, as Christians, and especially as Protestant Christians, we can desire no appeal.

We commence, then, as the most striking and remarkable of all the declarations of Scripture upon this head, with the words of the text, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he

shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

Here, then, is a case in which the Spirit of God, speaking of baptism, uses the phrase, “The laver of regeneration,” as synonymous with it, meaning therefore, unquestionably, that the washing of baptism is the sign and seal of the washing of regeneration; and therefore, fully authorizing our Church to use the language which we have seen that she adopts respecting this important sacrament.

That this is no isolated passage, but that the general tenour of Scripture bears us out in expecting these great things from Christian baptism, when “rightly received,” may easily be demonstrated. We find St. Peter replying to the inquiry of the 3,000 converts on the day of Pentecost, “What shall we do?” “Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that

promise." In which passage the Apostle evidently intends by "putting on Christ," the putting him on spiritually, as well as professedly, the being "renewed in the spirit of their mind," and the putting on "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."¹ So far is he from saying this in a merely general manner of the Galatians as a Church, that he adopts a form of speech when he says, "As many of you," which clearly individualizes, as much as our Church does when she teaches us to thank God for the bestowal of the blessing in every particular case. And yet it would indeed be difficult to imagine that of all these Galatian converts, not one was ever found who deserted the faith to which he had been brought, or forfeited the spiritual blessings of which he had at baptism been made partaker, or, as our Church expresses it, "fell from grace given."

The great duty then of every Christian

¹ Eph. iv. 23, 24.

parent in bringing his child to the water of baptism, which we should deduce from this encouraging, and, as we trust, scriptural view of this holy sacrament, is to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,” asking great things of God, and expecting great things from Him, and believing that He who instituted this holy sacrament as a sign and seal of spiritual regeneration, will, when it is “rightly received,” be present by his Divine Spirit, to accompany it then and there by the blessing of which it is the seal and sign, that the child so offered to God may be then filled with the Spirit of God, may be made a new creature in Christ Jesus, and may by God’s grace “continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s end.”

“Would to God,” my brethren, to adopt the language of an eminent prelate who has occasionally addressed you from this place, “that this truth were better understood, and this primitive, this reason-

able baptism more generally practised ! Then we should not find so many who, though born of water as far as concerns the baptismal rite, are evidently not made new creatures by the Spirit who renews and sanctifies the soul.”² We say then, and we could wish that the view which we have been endeavouring to take of this important spiritual ordinance, might be deeply impressed upon the mind of every Christian parent, for we believe that it would tend greatly, not only to improve the feelings with which all would bring their children to the baptismal font, but to improve also the manner in which all would educate their children from their very earliest years, in the heartfelt love of that God and Saviour who had already done such great things for them. We say, Christian parents, look well to your privileges, rejoice in them, plead them in prayer before God, and act upon them in all

² Bishop of Chester’s Lectures on St. John, p. 83.

your intercourse with your children. Tell them they have a God who loves them, a Saviour who died for them, a Holy Spirit who sanctifies them ; be instant with them in season and out of season, that they in return may love, and serve, and imitate their Divine and blessed Master. We dare not assert that in every such case, the event will be, that your children shall really inherit the kingdom of heaven, because we know that “ sons of Belial ” were found both in Eli’s and in Samuel’s family, but we doubt not that it will be so in an incalculably greater number of cases than most Christians have faith enough to believe ; and we know not that there is a single instance either in Scripture, or in the record of Christian experience, where such means have been faithfully and perseveringly employed, and any reason has been left us to fear, that the event has been otherwise.

We have now, however, what may

appear to some a difficult task, to reconcile the language of our Church in her Catechism, in her Baptismal Service, and in the Article before us, with the lives, alas! of too many of her professed members. It has often been, and it no doubt in justice fairly may be asked, Whence comes it if every individual member of the Church of England be thus spoken of as regenerated, or born anew of the Spirit, so many in after life evidence no signs of any such change having ever taken place at all? To this we reply, that although we believe that our Church speaks in the language of Scripture and of truth, when she thus identifies baptism with the “washing of regeneration,” we believe also, that she speaks only in the language of charity and of hope, when she trusts that every baptised member of the communion has fulfilled the terms of his baptismal covenant, has nurtured the seed of divine grace, and as she originally asked for

him, has “ever remained in the number of God’s faithful and elect children.” Precisely as in her other sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, she, in the same judgment of charity, assumes that her members “have duly received those holy mysteries,”³ and in consequence are assured that they “are very members incorporate in the mystical body of the Son of God, and heirs through hope of His everlasting kingdom.”

Now it is perfectly true, that although in the service of this solemn sacrament of the Lord’s Supper we speak thus, and assume thus without the least hesitation, that “all we” who approach the table of the Lord “have duly received these holy mysteries,” yet that, with the utmost stretch of Christian charity, we must still fear that there are many at all times in the Christian Church, who in the language of the 29th Article, “do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the

³ Communion Service.

sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ." No enlightened Christian, however, is offended at the discrepance between the language and the fact, simply because we know that the Church is not now gifted with the power of "discerning spirits," or of reading the heart; and therefore is not only fully justified, but is bound in Christian charity to hope the best of all, and of each of her members.

This, indeed, appears to be the key to the right understanding of the motive and intention of our Church in all her services.⁴ It is obvious that if the Church have but one set of services for

⁴ E. g., In the much-controverted portion of her Burial Service, where, "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," firmly fixed in the hearts of her members, they are taught to offer their hearty thanks to God for delivering their brethren out of the misery of this sinful world, a thanksgiving which can only be consistently offered in the spirit of charity and of hope.

her members, she must so construct those services as to apply to the case of her real and spiritual, and not her nominal, members. Bearing this in view, there is nothing remarkable that she should act in faith upon the declaration of her God, that his “promises are to us and to our seed,” and concluding, that the parents and the sponsors of the children presented at the baptismal font, are themselves among the faithful, devoted, prayerful, servants of the Most High, she is bound to expect that the infant will “rightly receive” Christian baptism, that God will hear and answer petitions so scriptural, so reasonable, so entirely for the honour and glory of his own great and holy name, and that the child will “lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.”

That she is often disappointed, that in after years we are compelled to mourn over the alienation from God, of those, over whom as infants, we have united

in the prayers and thanksgivings of the Church, only proves that while our Church is true to her God, and to his revealed Word, by suppressing nothing of all the blessings which he has promised to his people, we parents are in too many cases untrue to the best interests of our children, and to our own souls, by not coming up to the baptismal font with more enlarged and scriptural views of these blessings, and that our children have not improved the gift of God which is in them, but have permitted the holy seed to remain unwatered by the dews of the Spirit, for which they have neglected to ask; and uncultured by the aid of the great Husbandman, whom they have foreborne to seek.

We must now pass on to the important and individual application of this high subject. This, then, brings us to the great practical question in which all are interested, not merely we who are parents in the welfare of our children,

but all in the welfare of their own souls. I address myself then to you, my brethren, as baptised members of the Church of England, and say to each individual among you,* your Church once beheld you brought as one, “by nature born in sin, and the child of wrath,” to the water of baptism, and there having offered her prayers that you might undergo that spiritual change, without which, as Christ himself has said, “you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven,” she returned her thanksgivings that you had undergone this change, had been born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost, made a child of God by the Spirit of adoption, and incorporated into the Church of the Redeemer. Now, brethren, we require you to ask yourselves, honestly and conscientiously, and as in the presence of Him who seeth the heart, whether, in your own case, this reasonable belief of your Church has been fulfilled? and that you may be

enabled to answer the inquiry, remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.” Have you then, like Samuel, and like Timothy, been so born of the Spirit, from your earliest infancy, that the unholy and sinful pleasures of the flesh have possessed no hold upon you, that you have not indulged them, have not tolerated them, have not allowed them, even for a moment, to gather strength by your supineness or indifference, but have been led to seek a power greater than your own to repel and to vanquish them? And, further than this, have you reason to hope that spiritual things have ever been your delight, the real element in which your souls would live, and in which alone they can breathe freely and unrestrainedly? If these things be so, “happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you;” for then may you indeed indulge

the hope that you have from your earliest infancy been brought among the spiritual children of the family of God, and educated for your Father's kingdom.

But, perhaps, such evidences as these are wanting. Then would we ask, have you the distinct, yet equally satisfactory and encouraging feelings, that whereas you once were blind, now you see ; that you have been renewed by the Spirit of God ; that old things have passed away, that all things have become new ; and that by God's own free and sovereign grace you have been brought out of darkness, and misery, and sin, into the glorious light, and liberty, and holiness, of his redeemed people ? That you, through grace, have been taught to deplore and to forsake the sins and follies of your youth, your once cherished lusts and unholy passions, and are now endeavouring, even now, though it be but at the eleventh hour, to serve the Lord

Jesus Christ in all holiness and godliness of living.

Or, again, are you conscious that this testimony also is absent, that spiritual feelings, the faith and penitence, the joy and hope, of the believer, are still to you as unknown and disregarded things; that the world, and the things of the world, form your home and your enjoyment; that pride and vanity, sensuality and uncharitableness, or even some of the darker children of the natural heart, are still, as they have ever been, the welcomed inmates of your bosom? Upon what then do you ground your assurance that you are, at the present moment, “a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven?” Upon your baptism? Surely you have not the hardihood to avow such a conviction. As well might Simon Magus, who was baptised by an apostle, have contravened the decision

of St. Peter, “ I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,” by pointing to the waters of baptism, as that any baptised member of the Christian Church should take comfort to himself while in a state of alienation from God, and disobedience to his commands, and indifference to the Saviour of the world, from having once been made the subject of the prayers and thanksgivings of his Church. No, brethren, “ by their fruits ye shall know them ;” there is no other test here, there will be none other on the great day of account. Living thus, and dying thus, it is vain, utterly vain, for you to hope, when standing before the bar of God, that it will avail you to plead baptismal regeneration. Where are its fruits ? what have been its effects ? where is the renewed heart ? “ the death unto sin,” the “ new-birth unto righteousness,” the love to the Saviour, which must ever be features in the character of

“ a member of Christ ? ” where the love to God, which must ever be the feeling of “ a child of God ? ” where the meetness to be partaker of the worship, and the joys, and the services, of the heavenly temple, which must ever mark “ an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven ? ” Alas ! are all these absent, and yet do you imagine that no total change of heart, and affections, and mind, and life, in you can be required ? Banish for ever such a delusion, or it will be your ruin. Be assured, if God be true, that if you have lived, and are now living, in sin, if you have entirely or partially forgotten God, and been content to receive the wages, and to act as the servants of “ the world, the flesh, and the devil,” his bitterest enemies, no slight improvement, no merely moral reformation, will avail you. You may denominate the change which God requires of you by any term ; you may speak of it in any language you prefer ; we will not

contend for names, but things : a change, an entire change, must be wrought in you, or you will not see the kingdom of God. “ The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,” even unto death, and unless the whole head be enlightened by the Spirit of God, and the whole heart renewed by the Spirit of God, the spiritual death of the present hour will be inevitably succeeded by the eternal death of banishment from God, and from the presence of his glory. We do then most earnestly exhort you who have never yet thought seriously of your baptismal covenant, to read over carefully the service of your Church which contains it, to examine yourselves by it, to inquire, before you come to the second sacrament of your Church, whether you have ever been lastingly benefited by the spiritual blessings of the first sacrament—whether your part of the baptismal covenant has ever yet been performed—whether the devil and his works, the

world and its vanities, the flesh and its lusts, have ever yet been really and conscientiously renounced—whether, in fact, you have any sensible evidence that you have been born anew of the Spirit ; and if not, to be most earnest in persevering prayer to God, that you may be a partaker of that spiritual renewal, without which the kingdom of heaven will be as certainly, as effectually, closed against the baptised and nominal worshipper of God, as against the most dark, and obdurate, and guilty, of the unbaptised worshippers of wood and stone. For never did the God of truth declare a more solemn, a more awakening truth than this, “ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”⁵

⁵ John iii. 3.

DISCOURSE VIII.

1 COR. X. 16.

“THE CUP OF BLESSING WHICH WE BLESS, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAK, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST?”

THE Article which comes under our present consideration, and which will conclude the series, is the Twenty-eighth Article of our Church, and treats upon the important subject of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

It will perhaps tend to the better comprehension of the subject before us, if, as while speaking of the other sacrament, we shortly remind you of the origin and institution of this solemn rite, before we proceed to comment upon our Church's exposition of it.

Nothing can be more simple, and to an awakened heart, to one who has been taught to love God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, nothing can be more affecting, than the Gospel narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Hear it, then, in the plain yet beautiful language of Holy Writ, and may all our hearts be warmed and elevated by the views it affords us of the wisdom and loving-kindness, the consideration and tender compassion of our great High Priest who first appointed it! "And when the even was come," say the evangelists,¹ "Jesus sat down and the twelve Apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired" (or I have most heartily desired) "to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." This, then, was the last Passover of which the Lord Jesus Christ was

¹ Matt. xxvi. 20. Luke xxii. 14.

to be partaker ; it was more than this, it was the last Passover which God would recognise in his Church ; it was the final rite of the old dispensation, the death-song of Judaism. All that the Passover had ever typified was that night to be realised ; the true Paschal Lamb was to be delivered to the slaughterers ; “ the blood of sprinkling,” which should throughout all ages secure the people of God by a spiritual deliverance far more wonderful, and far more blessed, than the temporal deliverance of the first-born in Egypt, was on that coming morn to be poured forth ; when he, the Lamb of God, the great propitiation, should close the series of one thousand four hundred Passovers, by the sacrifice of himself. Our Lord then “ heartily desired ” to partake for the last time of this solemn rite with his beloved Apostles ; he “ heartily desired ” that the shadow should pass away, and the great and glorious reality, which should bring

pardon and peace to a ruined world, should be consummated : yes, strange as it may seem, he “ heartily desired ” that coming meal, although a more sorrowful one he had never been partaker of, or one more calculated to arm with ten-fold anguish, the sufferings that awaited him.

And now his desire had been fulfilled, that evening meal was over, the final Passover was concluded, and the Lord of Life and his disciples still lingered in the supper-room, delighting in that spiritual converse which made their hearts burn within them, and presented to them no feeble foretaste of the communion of the saints in bliss. The bread and wine, always accompaniments of the Jewish Passover, still remained upon the table ; when Jesus, no doubt during some solemn pause in the conversation, when all minds were filled with the thought of those approaching sorrows of which our Lord had on that evening for the first

time plainly spoken, took up the bread, and breaking it, and pouring forth his blessing upon it, delivered it to his disciples, with these few but emphatic words, "Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me." Likewise also "he took the cup," and blessing that in like manner, "he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it." And he said unto them, "This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you,"² and "for many for the remission of sins."³ "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

How simple, how touchingly beautiful is the whole of this Gospel narrative. Our Lord well knew not only the corruption, but the coldness and ingratitude of the human heart. He knew that years, nay centuries must pass away,

² Luke xxii. 20.

³ Matt. xxvi. 28.

and that the history of his dying love should fall upon men's ears, and on men's hearts, like a tale of other times, in which they were little interested; while even to the few, the happy few, who should in all ages adore and venerate that Saviour's name, there would be still the strong temptation to suffer their hearts to dwell upon "the things which are seen and are temporal," to the frequent forgetfulness of those which "are not seen and are eternal." To meet, then, this never-ceasing, never-slumbering tendency of our corrupt and fallen nature, was no doubt the primary intention of the striking incident we are considering. "This do in remembrance of me." And mark how small a thing it was that the Saviour of the world requested of his followers; as though he had said, When in times to come, you assemble together in my name and in my worship, I ask of you no great, no costly sacrifice; I only ask to live in

your memory and in your love. I only desire to see, and to let an unbelieving world see, that in every generation throughout all time, there shall still be some who will remember the transactions of this awful night, who will adore and love the despised Saviour, and acknowledge him in this, the lowest point of his humiliation, as their Redeemer and their God. Add, then, this little act, this slight memorial of all the sorrow and the anguish you will this night witness, of all the agonies of that scene from which to-morrow's sun will hide his face, add only this slight memorial from time to time to your accustomed sacrifice of prayer and praise; eat one piece of broken bread, and drink one drop of wine, in the name of the Crucified. Do this in remembrance of me, at those your solemn festivals, from this my hour of suffering, until I come again in peace and receive you unto myself.

Who could resist such an appeal?

who disobey such a command?—neglect so easy, so merciful a request? It were impossible. More than eighteen centuries have passed away, since in that upper chamber in some obscure house in the city of Jerusalem, the words which conveyed the request were spoken by that lowly sufferer to his broken-hearted followers; and is it too much to say that “their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world?” From that night to the present hour, all ranks, all classes of Christian believers, have united in fulfilling this last request of their Redeemer. Kings have descended from their thrones, and laid aside their crown, and for a time forgotten all their earthly pageantry, and knelt in reverence to the King of kings, and been partakers of his humble feast. High and low, rich and poor, all who name the name of Christ, have remembered, and rejoiced to remember, his dying love, by accepting this his dying

invitation. Century after century has passed away, the monuments of human greatness have mouldered into dust, the laws inscribed upon tablets of brass have perished, dynasties and empires have risen and fallen and are forgotten, and these few simple sentences—that short, affecting memorial, has outlived them all—never obliterated, never even suspended ; no single week,—we might perhaps with perfect truth assert, no single day, has ever yet passed by, which did not witness some little assemblage of the followers of the Redeemer “ doing this in remembrance of Him ;” and thus, as the Apostle says, “ showing forth the Lord’s death until he comes.”

Can we then wonder, since such was the origin of this holy service, that in the primitive Church it was partaken of every day ? While the person of the Redeemer was fresh in men’s recollections, while the transactions of that awful night were vividly impressed

upon their feelings, it is difficult to conceive a single day passing over them without the last accents of the Saviour's voice, "Do this in remembrance of me," sounding in their ears. While the memory of that "man of sorrows," toiling up the hill of Calvary bearing his cross, and soon after stretched in unutterable agonies upon it, showing what he was content to "do in remembrance" of them, lived strongly upon their hearts, it is difficult to imagine that a day could have gone by, without their longing for the hour at which they might commemorate such agonies, such love, by complying with the last request of their departed Master. Brethren, the wonder is,—and if men's hearts were what they should be, such could have never been,—the wonder is, that from days, the celebration of this service should have been transferred to weeks, and from weeks to months, and from months to some few widely-scattered days of festival, between

whose long and dreary intervals, the heart of the recipient has ample time to grow cold and hard, and careless to the blessings he so rarely commemorates. Until at last this service of love is dropped aside like some forgotten and unprofitable ceremony, to be again no more remembered. Stay, did I say no more remembered? I greatly wronged the power, not of memory, but of conscience. It is remembered: how awfully and, alas! usually how unprofitably remembered, let death-beds tell. There, when the last sad hour is hastening on, when all is doubt, and uncertainty, and terror—when every human aid has been sought, and yet all baffled, utterly baffled, and obliged to recede before the advancing step of man's great enemy, then is it well remembered, while some such thoughts as these pass solemnly before the mind: 'There was one who died for sinners, and in whose name I also was baptised, and to whose Church I.

also nominally belonged. He was once in circumstances such as I am now ; and as he stood upon the brink of eternity, he left one last, one small request, to every individual who should thereafter follow him ; that request I have been well acquainted with 'even from my earliest years, have, month after month, heard it reiterated by his servants, and have, month after month, deliberately turned my back upon the opportunity offered me of fulfilling it. Send, send quickly for a minister of Christ ; let me in this last hour compensate for thirty, forty, fifty years of gross neglect and disobedience to Him whom I shall soon see face to face !' Most wretched and miserable substitute, to offer the obedience of an hour, instead of the devotedness, the affection, the holy acknowledgments of a life.

Brethren, from what you have this day seen of the institution of this blessed ordinance, I leave it to your own re-

flection to answer the inquiry—Does this appear to you to be in any degree the intention or the object of the ordinance—to lull the fears of a departing sinner, to give an anodyne to conscience, when for the first time awakened to a sense of sin and danger? No two things were ever more at variance, than is the scriptural and profitable use of the holy Sacrament, with this unscriptural abuse of it. It was intended to commemorate the dying love of the Redeemer, by those whose hearts are filled with the consciousness of its unutterable value; not to propitiate his anger, by those who have never thought of him, or cared for him, until they knew that shortly they were to be dragged before his judgment-seat. It was intended to cheer and strengthen the living, while in the daily conflict, and race, and struggle of this world's duties; not to pacify the dying, by speaking peace, where peace is not. It was intended as a feast of love, by

which all Christians might enjoy spiritual communion with Christ their living Head, and with each other as the members of the same body, and the children of the same family, in anticipation of that far more glorious feast, where the Lord shall be bodily present, and whence no child of his shall be excluded ; but it was not intended for the selfish meal of the departing solitary, who knows not, who cares not for Christian intercourse, or for the body of the Lord's believing people, toiling and travailing upon earth ; who has never held an hour's communion with them, but who now asks a hasty viaticum for his last dread journey, lest his " feet stumble upon the dark mountains,"⁴ and he faint by the way.

Let us now turn to the Article, that we may see the intentions of this solemn ordinance as they are there expressed, upon the authority of our Church.

⁴ Jer. xiii. 16.

“ ART. 28.—*Of the Lord's Supper.*

“ The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves, one to another.” Our Church, therefore, acknowledges that it is the sign of this “ Communion of Saints,” by which they hold fellowship with each other, and with Christ, their living Head, but that it is not only this, “ but rather,” she continues, “ is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death ; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing a partaking of the blood of Christ.”

This declaration is evidently founded upon the words of the text, “ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion,” (or “ a communication⁵ to us,”) “ of the blood of Christ ; the bread which we break, is it not the commu-

⁵ Archbishop Secker.

nion of the body of Christ?" By which is clearly intended that great and mysterious truth, elsewhere asserted by our Church, that "The body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper."⁶

It is not necessary in this congregation to demonstrate the difference between this view of the Church of England, and the transubstantiation of the Romish Church, or the consubstantiation of the Lutheran Church; that it should ever have been confounded with them, as it has been with the latter, even in the high places of the land, is only a proof that men of great talent, and of great acquirement, are, unhappily, often ignorant of some of the very first truths of Christianity, and of some of the plainest and most important doctrines of their own Church. All that our Church asserts is simply this, that

⁶ Church Catechism.

when “received by the faithful,” and “rightly” received, for you will observe that she limits all the benefits in this case, as in baptism, to the right reception of the Sacrament, there is a strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the spiritual communication to us of the body and the blood of Christ, as there is in the common course of nature a strengthening and refreshing of our bodies by partaking of “bread and wine.” When we come to the Lord’s table in that state of penitence and faith, to which Christ has invited all his people, and to which, by his good Spirit, he is daily and hourly bringing them, then, and then only, do we reap the good of the ordinance, for then, and then only, are we spiritually partakers of the body and blood of our Redeemer. “Then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us;” we are more than ever closely united to the Saviour; he is formed in us “the

hope of glory," we receive anew the pardon of our sins, the consolation and strengthening of our souls, and find experimentally that our Lord's own declaration is a blessed truth, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Coming to the celebration of this high festival, then, "rightly, worthily, and with faith," our Church assures us that these good things shall not be withholden from any individual amongst us, but are the heritage of us and of our children for ever.

Are there any among you who will feel that this one word "worthily" strikes at the root of all the encouragement, and destroys all the comfort that has gone before. This is simply from a misconception of the requirements of that word : this is from affixing a meaning to the term "unworthily,"^s which the Apostle, who first made use of it, never did. Thus we find some

^r Col. i. 27.

^s 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29.

among you declaring, ‘ So long as I am engaged in my present occupations, I can never worthily approach the table of the Lord.’ Others again, ‘ So long as I am surrounded by the cares of a large family, by the domestic troubles to which I am exposed, I should not be a welcome guest !’ Dear brethren, there never was any thing more false and futile than such objections as these. Was the Saviour, when he spake the words, “ This do in remembrance of me,” surrounded by men of leisure, by men unencumbered by worldly cares and earthly occupations, or by men who had no domestic troubles, no family anxieties ? Far from it. Is not one of the first things which we hear respecting the disciples, after the resurrection of their Lord, that they returned to their usual avocations, and were toiling all night long upon the sea of Galilee ?⁹ Are you more heavily burdened with this

⁹ John **xxi.** 3.

world's business now, than they were then? Can you say as they could say, "Even unto this present hour, we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour, working with our own hands?" Or, again, was the Lord of life himself so entirely free from all domestic anxiety, when at the very hour of which we speak, he had a widowed mother unprovided with a home, who was to occupy his thoughts even upon the cross, and through whose soul the sufferings of her only Son should on that coming morning pierce as with a sword?¹ No! never since the hour when this high and holy solemnity was first imagined, have twelve men with hearts more filled with sorrow, with anxiety, with trouble, and with darkest apprehension of the gloomy future, met around the table of the Lord, than they who then sat down to its first and holiest celebration. If

¹ See Luke ii. 35.

these, then, be your excuses, brethren, learn that they form most excellent arguments for your constant attendance upon this holy ordinance, but not a shadow of an argument, do they furnish for staying away. If you are in trouble, here you may find a solace ; if in difficulty, guidance ; if in anxiety, peace. How many a full heart has gone up to the table of the Lord, overwhelmed with a burden which it was totally incompetent to bear, and at that table has been able to cast all, all without exception and without reserve, upon the Lord of the feast, and has gone back again, comforted and rejoicing.

Much harm has been done by good men upon this subject, by holding out a degree of worthiness, as essential to the due reception of these holy mysteries, which neither the Scripture nor the Church has ever hinted at. All that the Word of God says upon the necessary degree of preparation, is

simply this: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." All that the Church responds to this is, let them "examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purpose to lead a new life, have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and be in charity with all men." Now we would ask, is there a single word in this statement which ought to act as a prohibition to any individual who feels a real repentance for sin, a true faith in the Saviour, and a grateful recollection for all the blessings treasured up for him in Christ Jesus? In short, for any penitent and believing sinner, who is desiring to live to God here, and to live with God hereafter? Is there a word which speaks of high Christian attainment, or deep Christian experience? No, the Church evidently contemplated—it could con-

template no other—that the invitation should embrace every individual among her sincere members, from the youth who yesterday completed his pupillage and was received into full communion with the Church by “the laying on of hands;” to the aged soldier of Christ, the veteran in her ranks, who can exclaim, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” All are equally invited, enjoined, expected to be present. No individual can absent himself without sin, nay, without a double sin, a sin of disobedience and a sin of ingratitude.

In this respect there is not a shadow of distinction between the two Sacraments of our Church, both are equally considered as “generally necessary to salvation;” both therefore are equally considered as binding, and equally binding upon all; and it would be extremely difficult to show that the man who wilfully absents himself from the second

Sacrament, stands in any degree in a holier relationship to God, than the man who voluntarily neglects the first Sacrament. Yet who is there among you who would deny your children the blessing of Christian baptism? And will you be more cruel to your own souls than you are to your own flesh and blood? Will you deny them the opportunity of feeding by faith upon that which alone is “meat indeed, and drink indeed?” Above all, will you deny the Lord of life, the Saviour who died for you, his one last request, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Brethren, is there one among you, who to these inquiries would venture to reply, ‘I will?’ We cannot believe that there is an individual who could thus harden himself against his own mercies. As there is not one who would thus speak, we pray that there may not be one who would thus act in open defiance of the command of his Redeemer. These con-

siderations, however, we leave with yourselves, as long as we are compelled to open our doors at the close of the sermon, to give any of those committed to our charge an opportunity to escape from a service which is their highest privilege, and if they were wise, would be their greatest pleasure ; so long shall we, God permitting, never cease to sound in your ears, the duty and the privilege you are neglecting.

While to you, and we thank God for the very large and steadily increasing number of you, who delight in every return of this holy, and sanctifying, and strengthening ordinance, and who are, we trust, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, we would only say, let nothing ever keep you voluntarily from a mean of grace, of which past experience has so fully proved to you the excellency and the power. Let every return of it not only be a pledge to you of the Saviour's

love to your souls, but let it be also a pledge to Him of your increasing love to his service. Bear in mind, however, that his own Word has said, “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils;” meaning emphatically that by coming to his table, you do in the most solemn manner avow your allegiance to him, and proclaim open, irreconcilable hostility to his enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil; that you by this act solemnly declare that you have given “yourselves, your souls, and bodies” to be his, and his alone; that you acknowledge with the Apostle, that you are not your own, but his who has bought you with his blood.

Beloved, think how much is implied in that acknowledgment; what holiness, what purity, what love, what self-denial, what heavenly-mindedness, what gratitude. And while the acknowledgment of this gift involves on your part such high and holy duties, hear what blessed

privileges it involves on his part, who has vouchsafed to receive the gift, and to secure these privileges to yourselves.

“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.”

“Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.”

Your course then is plain, it is through the alone merits of your Redeemer, from duties here, to joys hereafter; from the Church militant, to the Church triumphant; from the imperfect communion of sinners like yourselves, to the perfect communion of saints in glory; from the table of your Lord and his spiritual presence upon earth, to the bridegroom's feast, the Supper of the Lamb, the personal presence of your Redeemer, in the kingdom of your Father.

ON THE DUTY OF EVERY CHRISTIAN GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION, AND TO MAINTAIN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

DISCOURSE IX.¹

ISAIAH xlix. 23.

“KINGS SHALL BE THY NURSING FATHERS AND THEIR QUEENS THY NURSING MOTHERS.”

AND of whom spake the Prophet these remarkable words? Of the Church of the living God. Not of that Church in the darkness and helplessness of her infancy, when confined to the chosen nation of the Jews, but of that same Church,

¹ This Discourse was written without the slightest view to publication, and is now only appended to the Discourses on the Articles, in deference to the wish expressed by many members of the congregation.

when, as we learn from the context, God should have “lift up his hand to the Gentiles and set up His standard among the people ;” when she should have broken forth on the right-hand and on the left, and possessed the gate of her enemy ; in fact, of the Church of God under the Christian dispensation. I have therefore selected the passage this morning, not with the intention of dwelling upon the words, but upon the principle, the important principle, developed in them, viz. the duty of a Christian Government to become the nursing father and nursing mother of the Church of the Redeemer.

During such times as the present, when unprecedented efforts are making for the furtherance of some great attempt to destroy the union that has so long and so happily subsisted in this country between the Church and State, I feel it compulsory upon me to depart from my ordinary subjects of ministration, to

endeavour to furnish my hearers with a few of those many arguments by which the Church Establishment to which they belong, may be legitimately and scripturally defended: You will not, brethren, hear the observations which I am about to offer to you with the less attention, if I tell you that the arguments which sustain them will have little of novelty to recommend them, since I have preferred selecting those, which after carefully considering the subject for myself, and reading what others have written upon both sides of the question, appear to be the most conclusive and the least assailable. Neither will you be inclined to listen to me with less than your usual candour, if I remind you that in the disputes which have latterly agitated, and are at present agitating in so violent a manner, both Dissenters and Churchmen, I have taken no part. The subject has never been, however distantly, alluded to from this place ; first, because I have

always felt that the plain and simple topics of scriptural instruction afford sufficient, and far more than sufficient occupation for these brief and hallowed opportunities ; and that if during the week, the minds of men are exercised, as they must ever be in this great metropolis, in the toils of labour, or the vicissitudes of trade, or the anxieties of professional duties, or the conflict of political opinions, the Sabbath ought to be a day of mental repose as well as of bodily rest, that no harassing or irritating topics should ever be permitted to interrupt its hallowed hours ; and that above all, no subject, no word, no thought should cross the mind while in the House of God, which does not, as the Word of God expresses it, “ make for peace ;” and, secondly, Because my hearty desire has always been that every conscientious Dissenter should be exempted from every thing that he can honestly, and as in the sight of Him who knows the heart, really

consider a burden upon his conscience ; because I respect a conscientious Dissenter as much as a conscientious Churchman ; and because in justice both to Dissenters and to Wesleyans, I am bound to add, that during the whole period, now more than ten years of my ministry in this parish, I have never in a single instance met with opposition, or contumely, or unkindness from them ; but, on the contrary, when occasionally brought into contact with them, with that treatment which as fellow-labourers in the Lord's vineyard, we should expect to receive from men earnestly and conscientiously engaged in the same great work.

It is unnecessary, we hope, to add, that nothing which shall be spoken on the present occasion, shall be in any degree at variance with feelings such as these ; that called upon, as I conceive myself to be, by the passing events around us, to endeavour to defend the

Establishment of which I am a very humble, but attached and devoted member, I obey the call with the fullest conviction that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,” that unless we bring to the task a really charitable feeling towards those who differ from us, and an earnest desire to avoid all fierce, and angry, and bitter controversy, the God whom we serve will withhold His blessing, and we shall run and labour in vain.

We shall first, then, endeavour to show that a Church Establishment provided by the State, and in immediate connection with the State, is according to the will of God and the experience of antiquity : and, secondly, That the blessings and advantages of a Church so constituted, are of a nature, and carried forth to an extent, which no Church, established on any other principles, could hope to emulate.

It is frequently said by those who are opposed to the existence of a Church Es-

tablishment, that it is unfair to derive any arguments in favour of it, from any thing antecedent to the Christian dispensation. This objection, if it be an honest one, and such we are willing to suppose it, must, we think, arise from a very limited and superficial view of the dispensations of God. For, however the frame-work may have been changed, a true knowledge of those dispensations will lead us to confess that the principles, the all-important principles involved, are in every case substantially the same.

We hesitate not then to go back even to the days of Abraham, to prove not merely the propriety, but the bounden duty, the imperious obligation of every Government, to provide the opportunities of religious worship for its people.

I need scarcely remind you that the peculiar characteristic of Abraham, which was selected by God himself for the marks of His especial approbation, was this, “Abraham shall surely become a great

and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ; for, I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment.”²

We find that when Abraham first obeyed the call of God, in coming out of the land of his nativity, accompanied only by Sarai his wife, and Lot his nephew, and the children of Lot's family, one of his first acts was to establish the family altar, and as a family to call on the name of the Lord. Again, we find that when, as the inspired writer tells us, he became “very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold ;”³ when his trained servants born in his own house and capable of bearing arms, amounted to three hundred and eighteen, and therefore when his whole retinue, including women and children, could not have been less, at the very lowest compu-

² Gen. xiii. 18, 19.

³ Gen. xiii. 2.

nation, than one thousand souls, that is, when he had become * a Prince and a Potentate, he did that for the many which he had before done for the few ; he erected the altar, and he commanded his subjects, as he had before commanded his servants, that they should keep the way of the Lord. Now can we for a moment suppose, that if Abraham had counted his retinue by thousands and by millions, instead of by tens and by hundreds ; in fact, if he had become the head of some mighty monarchy, he would have ceased to do that, for which his Lord had so graciously and so remarkably commended him ? Or can we imagine that God, who applauded the act when confined to Abraham's family, would have condemned it when extended to his empire ? Surely it is not too much to assert that, if God can look with pleasure upon the family altar erected by him whom He has placed at the head of the family, He must look

with ten-fold pleasure upon the national altar erected at the command, and maintained by the authority of him whom He has Himself placed at the head of the nation.

If we pass on from Abraham to the other Patriarchs, and especially to Jacob, we shall see the same principle distinctly recognised. When he became great, and God had blessed him abundantly, or, in his own language, when he became “two bands,”⁴ we find it recorded of him, that he provided religious opportunities for his followers, that he erected the altar of God in the midst of them, with the same regularity as he had done for himself, when at the commencement of his career, a poor and houseless wanderer, “with his staff”⁵ alone, he passed over Jordan.

We maintain then, that in all these cases there was the principle established, of those in authority, providing the opportunities of religious instruction and

⁴ Gen. xxxii. 10.

⁵ Gen. xxxii. 10.

worship for the people committed to their charge ; it matters not upon how small a scale it was exercised, but here was most distinctly the principle recognised and applauded by God, during the whole of the patriarchal dispensation ; for what has been proved respecting Abraham and Jacob, may be proved of all the other patriarchs. And if it be the acknowledged duty of the father thus to provide religious instruction for his children, the master for his household, the chief for his followers, where will you pause in the series before you arrive at the summit—the king for his people ?

You cannot stop short of this conclusion, unless you are prepared to say, that though as a father or a master you are bound by certain responsibilities, as a magistrate or a legislator you are absolved from them : you cannot stop short unless you are prepared to say, that in all our natural relations we are bound to

think and act as believers, and in all our political relations we are bound to think and act as unbelievers.

If from the Patriarchal we turn to the Mosaic dispensation, we find this principle not merely recognised, but forming the very marrow and essence of the whole, and distinctly appointed by God himself. Indeed the Jewish Church establishes so unanswerably the subject in debate, that the only method by which it has been ever attempted to be met, is, by asserting that it was a temporary and typical dispensation, and therefore cannot be fairly applied to ourselves. Now acknowledging, as we most unfeignedly do, that it was both a temporary and typical dispensation, we also acknowledge that all that was strictly Jewish, and temporary, and typical in the Church Establishment of the Jews, was to be done away, and most unquestionably these have been done away ; but then we contend that its

moral principles and moral obligations neither are, nor can be abrogated. We believe that it is only by confounding two things which are perfectly separate and distinct, viz., the typical with the moral portion of the dispensation, that the false impression conveyed by the enemies of a National Church can possibly stand.

The result, then, at which we arrive, from this portion of the subject before us, is the following. We would ask, is it at all analogous with God's dealings with his people, that a principle so clearly and plainly developed in the Patriarchal and in the Jewish dispensations as this, that those in civil authority should esteem it their bounden duty to provide religious instruction and worship for those committed to their charge, should be utterly unknown in the Christian dispensation? Is there any other principle, common to the two former, which is excluded from the

third? And is it not, then, contrary to all probability that the unchangeable Jehovah should depart from his own positive arrangements, when founded not upon the temporary circumstances of a peculiar people, but, as in this case, on the immutable relationship between God and man, and between man and his fellows? If we pass from the Old Testament to the New, we shall content ourselves with this most powerful negative argument in our favour, that there is nothing against an Establishment in the Gospels or Epistles; and to those among you who know best the method of instruction in the New Testament, this negative argument will have great weight. To enter fully into the force of this, you must remember, that it is not made use of to establish any new regulation, or its value might be questionable; but that it is simply brought forward in proof of the fact, that the Divine arrangement which

we have seen pervading all the history of the Church of God, previous to the Christian dispensation, was to continue untouched, as to its principle, during the ages which were to succeed the development of that dispensation. It is, in fact, precisely the same kind of argument, and equally strong, as that by which we prove that the Christian Sabbath is a Divine institution. Nothing is actually declared in the New Testament respecting the establishment of religion by Government, or the establishment of a Sabbath. Both were already in existence: both had been established long before: it is enough that neither was abrogated. Our Lord found his hearers educated in the strongest possible prepossessions in favour of a national religion, there was no need therefore of enforcing this duty. They, in fact, knew nothing of a religion supported in any other manner than by the State; all, then, that appears requisite for our Lord to have done upon this point

was, to leave his disciples as he found them. And is not this precisely what He did? Did our Lord convey a single hint, or did he commission his disciples who were to fill up his outline, to convey a single hint of a contrary tendency? No; with the exception of one solitary text, none have ever ventured to assert that he did. And look only for a moment at this exception, and you will see its total inapplicability to the present question. The text to which I allude is, as you are doubtless aware, our Lord's reply to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." When and where was it made? Was it at all in relation to the Church? Had it any reference to the establishment of his religion? Not the smallest. It was the declaration of our Lord when standing at the bar of the Roman governor. He was accused of forbidding his countrymen to pay tribute to Cæsar, and of saying that he was Christ, a King, and his reply is,

“ My kingdom is not of this world ; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews.”⁶ However possible, then, it may be, by taking half the sentence, to make it appear to apply to Church Establishments, no unprejudiced man, we imagine, could read the whole, without seeing that it applied simply and entirely to the accusation, that our Lord was endeavouring to erect a temporal kingdom in opposition to the power of Cæsar, and to establish this kingdom by the sword. So important is it not to build an argument upon half a passage of Scripture, but to weigh well the whole, and to examine well the context before we venture to claim the support of God’s Word. There is not indeed a single sentence, from the beginning of St. Matthew to the end of Revelation, which, without the grossest perversion of Scripture, or the most palpable neglect

⁶ John xviii. 10.

of the context, can be adduced as an argument against the interference of the civil power for the establishing and maintaining a national religion. Considering that, as we have seen, all our Lord's first disciples were nurtured in the prejudices of a national religion, is it probable, is it possible, that this should have been the case—that these prejudices should have been left untouched, if our Lord had really been opposed to them? Did he ever act in a similar manner with regard to any other subject? Take, for instance, the ceremonial law, established by God himself as undoubtedly as that the interference of the civil power with religion was established by God himself. For the abolition of the former, the most explicit declarations were communicated by God to man; for the abolition of the latter, not one word, as we have seen, has ever yet been communicated. What are we to conclude? What must every unprejudiced mind

conclude, when, of two duties equally enforced, the former is distinctly abrogated by the same voice which ordained it, and the latter is passed over in silence? surely we must confess, that the latter principle remains unaltered, unremoved, unshaken. “The account, then, of scriptural injunction,” as an able writer of the present day has well expressed it, “stands thus—in favour of Establishments, much; against Establishments, nothing.”⁷

Without attempting to establish the fundamental principle, for which we are contending, upon any of the single and scattered declarations of the divine Word, such as the prophecy of the text and many others, powerful though they be, we would leave it upon this simple, broad, and intelligible, and, as we believe, irrefragable foundation. That the principle of a national Church, was encouraged by God himself under the Patriarchal

⁷ Essay on the Church, p. 15.

dispensation, established by God himself under the Jewish dispensation, and left untouched by God himself when remodeling that sacred Establishment, under the Christian dispensation. That it is, in fact, founded on those moral obligations from which no possible change of circumstances can set us free, and like the divine institution of the Sabbath, though veiled for a while under Jewish types and Jewish ceremonies, has come down to us stripped of these, and yet retaining all the force and obligation, all the beauty and freshness of its divine original; equally binding upon man in his domestic character, in his social character, in his political character, equally imperative upon him as a father with his children, as a master with his servants, as a king with his subjects; and never to be disregarded without infringing the laws, and contemning the authority of God our Maker.

With regard to the practice of anti-

quity, it is sufficient in a single word to assert, what no one can deny, that with the exception of the first three hundred ~~years~~ in the Church's history, when every emperor was an unbeliever or a persecutor, or both, and therefore when Christianity could not be the religion of the State, there never was a period when the religion of Christ was not fostered and protected by the State.* And that during the whole or the greater part of those first three hundred years, miraculous powers remained in the Church, as if to protect its infancy, until the first Christian emperor, immediately upon his conversion, should establish it as the religion of the country, and throw over its institutions the shield of the civil power; a duty which was not more clearly seen by Constantine, than it was gratefully and unhesitatingly accepted by the whole

* See Sermons on this subject by the Bishop of London, and by the Rev. Dr. Dealtry.

body of the Christian Church ; not a single dissentient voice having ever been raised, not an individual Christian foretelling or foreseeing that a day could arrive when the connexion between Church and State should be called an unholy union, or when good men of any persuasion would unite to dissolve and to destroy it. Upon this point, we will only add a single observation, that however conscientious Dissenters may at the present moment view this question, from the beginning, even among themselves, it was not so ; that in fact the greatest, the holiest among their forefathers, are all found ranged on the side of an Establishment, and fighting its battles. It is sufficient to mention the names of Owen, Baxter, Flavel, Howe, Henry, and Doddridge, in support of the assertion ; and to show that they were not lukewarm friends of that cause, of which many of their descendants are the enemies, we will quote a single passage of

that most eminent non-conformist, the truly wise and pious Dr. Owen, who, when preaching before the long Parliament, thus expressed himself:—"Some⁹ think if you (the Parliament) were well settled, you ought not, in anything as rulers of the nation, to put forth your power for the interest of Christ; the good Lord keep your hearts from that apprehension!" "If once it comes to this, that you shall say you have nothing to do with religion, as rulers of the nation, God will quickly manifest that he hath nothing to do with you, as rulers of the nation."¹ A sentiment which we pray that the Spirit of God may keep constantly before the eyes, and write upon

⁹ Owen's Works, vol. xiv. p. 415. Edit. 1826.

¹ Vol. xv. p. 499.—Perhaps Dr. Adam Clarke's well-known testimony in favour of Church Establishments, ought also to be referred to. See his note on 1 Kings xiii. 33, which concludes thus:—"Whatever the reader may do, the writer *thanks God for the religious Establishment* of his country. For abuses in Church and State he is the last to contend."

the hearts of every legislator of a Christian nation, who expects to enjoy the blessing and favour of the Most High, upon his efforts for the good of the nation.

II. But we must proceed to the second division of our subject, the peculiar advantages of an Established Church.

Of the blessings and advantages of a Church Establishment, every individual, whether Churchman, or Dissenter, or Infidel, is, however he may deny it, or however he may in truth be ignorant of it, most unquestionably a partaker. Wherever a church is built, and an active and godly minister is appointed, every rank and class in the adjoining society, and every individual in that society, whether he enter the church, or whether he do not, is in some degree improved and benefited. To those who become partakers of its ordinances, the benefits are sufficiently obvious. The higher classes who, amidst the refine-

ments of luxury, or the allurements of intellectual pride, might not be willing to go far out of their way to hear the self-denying doctrines of the Gospel, are met by them at their very doors, and are told the truth, the plain and life-giving truth from God's Word, with an authority which nothing but the official character of a duly appointed minister of God, and we might also add, of a parochial minister, necessarily independent both of their smile and of their frown, can competently insure. In what is termed the "voluntary system," the minister must be exposed to an interference from his congregation, from which the parochial minister alone is free. The importance of this, in securing an unfettered ministration of the Word of God, is too obvious to require a single observation. Again, the poorer and less informed classes are brought under the teaching and hallowing and comforting influences of the divine pre-

cepts and promises, both in public ministrations and private visiting, with a frequency, I may almost say, a constancy, with which no other institution can supply them. And let me add, at free cost, which, except in a national Church, is, and must be, almost unknown. We speak it in no disparagement to other orders of Christians, for we love and revere every order of Christians, who “love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;”² but we state it merely as a fact, which the very constitution of their order requires, that even the poor who attend their places of worship are expected (we do not say compelled, but expected) to contribute, and, as is well known, do, in the aggregate, contribute largely to the maintenance of their ministers. Now what is the case in the Establishment? There, and there alone, can it be said, that “The poor have the Gospel preached to them,”³ “without money and without price.”⁴ Look

² Ephes. vi. 24.³ Luke iv. 18.⁴ Is. lv. 1.

at the ten thousand parish churches scattered over the face of the country, and we refer to the country, because, however the “voluntary system” of Dissent may thrive in the large and wealthy towns, it has, even to the present hour, been literally unable to obtain the smallest footing in many of our remote villages, from the absolute incapacity of their poor inhabitants to contribute any thing to its support—we say then, look at the numerous parish-churches scattered over the face of the country, scarcely a village, from among whose trees you do not behold that beautiful and heart-cheering sight, the village spire. See these churches, as many of you no doubt have^d rejoiced to see them, filled on the Lord’s-day with agricultural labourers of the poorest description, who have been trained in the Sunday-school, instructed privately as well as publicly, and prepared carefully by their resident minister, for Confirmation and for the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper; and

who, during their whole lives, remain under his plain and affectionate instruction, seated on the same benches on which their fathers and their grandfathers have sat and heard the word of life ; and yet, with the exception of the trifling fees for the occasional offices of the church, which occur but rarely in the life of any individual, not one farthing have the occupants of those benches, from generation to generation, ever contributed, or been expected to contribute, towards the maintenance of the church, or the support of the minister. What but a national establishment could ever have the power, however it might possess the will, to make such an abundant provision upon such easy terms ?

We have said that those without, as well as those within the pale, are benefited by our Church Establishment. Observe only the effect of a single church thus planted in the midst of a moral and a spiritual wilderness, and surely you will not doubt it. Take, for instance,

any of those churches which have been lately built at the sole charge of the nation, and which, although situated in the midst of a dense and ignorant population, would seldom, we may confidently assert, have been erected, had they waited for the expression of their necessity, from those who stood the most in need of them. For, as has been unanswerably demonstrated,⁵ religious instruction is the great exception to that general rule which regulates the supply by the demand. In other cases, it may be true; in religion, it is unquestionably false; there is no demand until long after the supply has been brought: there is no feeling of our need, until that feeling has been originated by the blessing of God upon those very means by which it is afterwards to be supplied. Take then, we say, for instance, any one of the churches lately built by Government, and look only at the effect produced upon those who never enter it, upon “them

⁵ By Dr. Chalmers.

that are without.”⁶ Do they derive nothing from its charities, nothing from its influence, nothing of increased security to their properties and their persons, from a more scripturally enlightened, and therefore a better conducted population growing up around them? Nothing of improvement among their dependents, from the spread of that moral influence, or that intellectual cultivation, which thrives under its widely-spreading branches? Surely, taking it, and I have intentionally so taken it, upon the lowest grounds that the merest worldling could desire, it is impossible not to concede the fact, that every parish church, i. e., every church which insures the Sunday and the week-day ministrations of an appointed minister, to an appointed people, is a blessing, a peculiar blessing, both to those who are brought into immediate contact with its ordinances, and to those who dwell in its vicinity.

⁶ Col. iv. 5.

In conclusion, we would only add, that if our Church establishment be thus, as we believe it to be, a blessing to all, whether they are indifferent to it, or dissent from it, or are opposed to it, of how much greater blessing is it, under God, to those who are “the lively members” of its blessed institutions, who partake of its scriptural services, and who profit by its imperfect, but scriptural and faithful ministrations.

Brethren, if you really love the great and glorified Head of the Church, you will love the Church which He has purchased with His blood; and as one of the purest and most efficient branches of it, you will love, and venerate, and unceasingly pray for the Established Church of your native country. You will draw the closer to her in this, which, if dark clouds foretel the tempest, may soon be her hour of need. You will uphold her religious institutions, you will maintain her union with the State, you will stand by her most scriptural characteristics, her apos-

tolical episcopacy, and her episcopally ordained ministry—you will support her best, her truest, her *spiritual* interests. You will love her too well to cling to her abuses, which it is the mark of a true affection to be the first to deplore, and, as far as in you lies, the first to remedy. You will, therefore, stand as far aloof from those who would alter and improve nothing, as from those who would rush in with bold and desperate foot, “where angels fear to tread.” You will love her, not as a mere political engine, but as the handmaid of the Lord, because she has for centuries honoured Him, whom it is the dearest desire of your heart to honour; finally, you will love her, because, within her walls you have first learnt “the way to Zion;” because, within her walls, you have found guidance, and instruction, and encouragement, and peace. She has been your spiritual parent, nurse, and counsellor, and you will, in return, be her faithful children, her uncompromising supporters, her en-

lightened, and prayerful, and steady, friends. You will say of her, the Church of God, as David said of old of the city of God, “ If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee,”⁵ in thy trouble to help thee, in thy dangers to assist thee, in thy difficulties to pray for thee, “ let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”⁶ And you will, if you are the true and consistent members of such a Church, pass from the worship of her courts below, to that blessed place of which the apostle declared, “ I saw no temple there, for God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”⁷

⁵ Psalm cxxxvii. 5.

⁶ Psalm cxxxvii. 6.

⁷ Rev. xxi. 22, 23.

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